



WORLD TEACHER

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THE MASTER AND HIS STUDENTS





"AMATEUR."

I COULD READ HIS MOVEMENTS LIKE AN OPEN BOOK.
I EASILY AVOIDED AN ONCOMING PUNCH, GRABBED HIS NECK,
PULLED HIM TOWARD ME, AND PUNCHED HIM IN THE FACE.

Prelude: The World's Strongest Agent

The black-haired young man sprinted down the gloomy, maze-like corridors. His running caused the robe of his school uniform to flutter in the wind, yet he was still able to face the group of enemies that appeared to block his path; he was not slowed down. He continued to sprint forward, and rushed down a nearby staircase. If he wanted to save his precious students, he had to keep going.

He managed to reach the ground floor safely, but the building's layout forced him to take yet another detour before he could arrive at his destination. It was clear he had no time for that.

He pointed his finger at the wall ahead of him and fired one of his unique, original spells. It carved a large hole in the wall which served as a convenient detour, allowing him to make it in time. On the other side, his three precious pupils were being attacked. One of the assailants, a demi-human, was about to deliver the final blow to a student who was lying on the ground. Without a second of hesitation, the man rushed in between them. The demi-human stared blankly at the man for a second, then lunged at him with his giant fist. Any normal human would have been mortally wounded from such a strike, but the man easily dodged the attack. He retaliated, sending the demi-human flying with a solid kick of his own. Still keeping a close eye on the remaining assailants, he turned to face his students protectively.

“Lord Sirius...”

A silver-haired young girl with distinct wolf ears called the man's name. Even though the visibility was poor in the dark room, he could see a hopeful smile spread across her face.

“Are you all right, Emilia?”

“Yes.”

Despite her reply, Emilia remained on the ground; perhaps she had been immobilized by a previous blow. Next to Emilia, another girl with strikingly blue hair sat with her face buried between her hands. The sound of Sirius's voice caused her to look up, tears streaming down her pale face.

"Sirius, you... came."

"Of course I did."

"Big... bro..." "Of course I did."

"Leus, you did well holding out by yourself."

A mischievous-looking boy with silver hair and wolf ears lay collapsed next to Emilia. It looked like he had been fighting for dear life trying to protect the girls. Shallow cuts spanned across his entire body. His face was covered in tears and bruises, yet Leus hid the pain as he gazed proudly up at his mentor.

"I... gave it my... all."

"Yeah, good job. I'll handle it from here. It will all be over when you wake up."

"Okay."

Sirius turned to glare at the remaining foes. He was prepared to keep his promise to his student.

"I won't let you lay another finger on my students."

Fueled by the rage of seeing them injured, he rushed forth.



This was just one of many of Sirius's stories. The man once known as the strongest agent in the world was reincarnated and sent to another world, where he became a respected teacher.

Prologue

“Ga... to... answer me!”

Inside the headquarters of one of the most powerful corporations on the continent, something was amiss. The president's office, normally decorated with beautiful marble, had been completely turned on its head. The walls were filled with bullet holes and craters from explosions, and the ornate furniture was reduced to rubble. Scattered around the room were countless bodies, all with bullet wounds to the head. Truly, it was an absolutely horrifying sight to behold.

But among the carnage, one man was still moving. He was clad from head to toe in protective gear. He tried to get up several times, but continued to fall over. Eventually, the man gave up on trying to get up; he chose to crawl to a nearby wall in order to catch his breath. Then, he hit the small button on the mic in his ear.

“Hello? This is code Accel.”

“Are you okay?! Give me a status report!”

Among the pile of bodies, one elegantly-dressed corpse stood out. This man didn't simply have a bullet wound to the head—there were bullet wounds scattered throughout his body, as well as deep wounds from explosions. He had been the living man's target.

“The target is... down. Just clean-up left I suppose? Cough.”

“What? Save that for later! Hurry up and get out of there first!”

“H-Haha, that's... not happening.”

The man looked down at his own body. His abdomen had been peppered with bullets, and his left foot shot clean off. The feeling in his left arm was all but gone, and doing something as simple as talking felt excruciating. With his only working arm, he took out a small device from his pocket and released the safety

on it. In his hand was a detonator which would set off explosives placed throughout the entire building when pressed. It would wipe everything in the near vicinity off the map—including the man himself.

“We’ll come get you right away! Hey, is the chopper ready?! Permission?! I’ll get that later, this is urgent!”

The man’s partner desperately tried to act from the other side of the mic, but there was simply no time left. The man opened his mouth in an attempt to stop his partner from trying, only to pause at the sound of a door flying open in the background.

“Instructor!”

The sound of his students reached his ears.

“Instructor, don’t give up!”

“There’s still so much you need to teach us!”

“Please, instructor! D-Dad!”

They had all been briefed on the mission and agreed, but they still refused to accept the situation. While hearing their protests made the man worried they were all still too immature, it also filled him with joy. As their teacher, he felt obligated to leave them with some final words. Summoning his final strength, the man spoke up.

“Line up!”

“Yes?!”

The students all replied in unison, perhaps reacting out of instinct that had been drilled into them from training.

“You guys know what I’m going to say... right?”

“Don’t stop moving forward!”

“Good. You guys will do fine on your own. Man up, and live.”

“... Roger!”

He could hear them all choking up. They were probably all crying, he thought. He spoke to the mic.

“Sorry... hey, about my students...”

“Of course, they’ve earned it. But... are you sure there’s no way out?”

“You already... know the answer to that...”

“Right.”

The reply was filled with worry and pain.

“I’ve... left my mark... so I can go out... smiling.”

“I’ll handle it from here on out.”

“I’m counting on you. It was... a fun ride.”

“Right back at you.”

With that, the man brought his finger to the switch. He had lost too much blood and was on the verge of passing out. He knew he had done his job. There was only one thing left to do. With the last of his remaining strength, he hit the switch. A distant crash could faintly be heard; it grew louder by the second until it caught up to the man and caused the roof to crash down. A hail of rubble and steel—that’s the last thing the man saw.

Chapter 1: Rebirth

It might not have been up to me to decide, but I felt like my life had been an unusually tough one.

Between torture played off as “training,” and my definition of “going for a stroll” being a walk through a warzone, I think it was a fair assessment.

In the midst of said troubled life, I became the 37th special operator for an underground organization; a secret agent, if you will.

I met my partner there—whose resolve I fell in love with—and the two of us fought side-by-side from then on.

In my 50s, after surviving years of dangerous work, I retired from field work and became an instructor instead.

Despite being difficult, it was a fulfilling job. I had to work hand in hand with my students. But, during this time, a secret organization was working to take over the world. They set an evil plan into motion.

Our agency picked up on the group’s movements, but determined that taking their leader out would prove difficult. As such, they sent their best man to do the job: me.

I bet they felt safe knowing that if an old man like me were to die in action, it wouldn’t be much of a loss anyway. There may have been some people who, jealous of my skill, wanted me gone too.

My partner knew I was being used and was against it from the start. Nonetheless, I accepted the mission. I had the higher-ups promise that my partner would get a promotion if I succeeded, and that was enough for me.

And, after pulling off the plan perfectly... I died.

That story went on longer than expected. The gist of it is that my life was far from a normal one.

By the time I died, I was around 60; few things could take me by surprise. I had seen a lot, but I was still unable to hide my confusion at the situation I found myself in.

“Waaa!”

Of course, anyone would be shocked if they were turned into a baby. I tried to shout, but it just turned into crying, as you’d expect.

I couldn’t move my tiny hands and feet the way I wanted, either—just like a real baby. I had always been good at dealing with shocking situations, but this was too much even for me. I tried hard to calm down and assess the situation. As I was attempting to do so, something peeked down at me from above.

“...? ...?”

Someone seemed to be looking down at me and talking, but my underdeveloped ears and eyes couldn’t make sense of it at all. The main takeaway is that they didn’t seem to be there to harm me, though.

I decided to try scanning my memories for clues.

I suffered life threatening wounds in the process of taking my target out. I knew I couldn’t make it out of there alive, so I decided to blow the whole place up, myself with it.

The last thing I remembered was rubble and concrete crashing onto me from above. I passed out and suddenly woke up as a baby. Okay. That still made no sense at all.

I had definitely died, so why had I suddenly turned into a baby?

Some people believe in being reincarnated and all that, but why would I have retained my memories?

Wouldn’t your soul and your mind be wiped clean when you got reincarnated?

The weirdest thing was that I was still able to remember all the details of my life, but I couldn’t recall the faces of my students and my partner. It was like there were holes within my memories.

I had no real theories at all as to what could have happened, and there was no one to ask for answers.

Out of the blue, the person above me lifted me up and interrupted my train of thought. They started singing in a calm voice as they cradled me.

Because of my poor eyesight, I couldn't see them too clearly. I could tell they were human, at the very least.

From what I could make out, she seemed like an older woman—and quite the beauty, at that. She had long, blue hair. Had I met her in my old life, I would have likely asked her out for a drink.

For some reason, she was wearing a maid uniform. It looked too well put together to be cosplay. Maybe she was a real maid? That meant it was very possible I was in a foreign country.

While I analyzed the situation, the woman kept rocking me back and forth gently, humming some kind of children's song.

I still couldn't make sense of the words, but the warm and loving way she handled me started to make me slowly drift off.

I still had so much to think about, but the pleasant warmth of her embrace was too hard to resist, and I fell asleep.



A month had passed since I woke up in this strange situation, but I had not yet seen anything beyond the room I was kept in.

It was a fairly small room, and rather barren besides the bed I slept in and a lone closet. The old-fashioned sheets were quite uncomfortable to the touch. Considering my only purpose so far had been eating and sleeping, I already showed considerable growth.

I could see better now, and speech no longer sounded like muffled noise from broken speakers. I even managed to improve my mobility, although it took a lot of effort. If I exerted myself too much, I'd quickly get hungry.

I was always given food when I got hungry, which made me think that

someone always kept an eye on me. But on this day they were a lot slower, for some reason. I hadn't cried since waking up in this body; not even once. Since I was hungry, I decided to try it out. As I was about to try, the door finally opened. Like usual, the blue-haired maid walked in.

“ ... ”

Right. I could hear, but I still couldn't make any sense of what she was saying.

Thanks to my work, I'd learned several languages from around the world.

Unfortunately, I didn't recognize this one at all. I was still stuck in a baby's body, so I couldn't ask her anything anyway. I figured just listening to her over time would eventually teach me enough to understand. For now, food was more important.

Just then, I noticed another girl wearing a similar maid uniform walk out from behind the blue-haired woman.

I grew guarded, but the woman thought nothing of it. She brought the spoon to my mouth and fed me in the same loving manner as usual.

A thought struck me—shouldn't babies normally be fed milk from a bottle? Well, whatever.

I simply opened my mouth and ate, not giving it too much thought.

“ ”



Maybe she was showing the other girl how to do it?

After feeding me a couple of spoonfuls, she handed the food over to the girl and left the room. The girl smiled from ear to ear, which made me notice something strange.

Why did she have cat ears?

She was a cute girl, with her red hair tied up in a ponytail. But I just couldn't stop thinking about the cat ears on her head.

There were a lot of younger kids in my day who liked cosplaying as various characters, but these were different. The ears moved just like the real thing.

As I lay there, confused, the girl brought the spoon to my mouth.

I had a lot of questions about the whole situation, but hunger still came first, so I complied and opened my mouth wide.

“...!”

For some reason, the girl practically trembled with joy each time I ate. Once I had finished, she just stood there gazing at me. Maybe she was one of those girls who just couldn't look away when faced with something cute. Then again, I hadn't seen myself in the mirror or anything, so I couldn't attest to whether I was cute or not.

Were those ears actually real? To find out, I tried reaching out to touch them, but the girl smiled brightly and caught my hands in hers. This went on for a while until she finally seemed to get what I was trying to grab and leaned down. Just as I thought. After touching her fluffy ears for a bit, I could tell that they were definitely real. Not only that—when I looked down, I also spotted a tail. Was she really human?

“...!”

As I was reeling over the fact that I'd just seen a girl with real animal features,

her expression changed. She looked like she'd just had a great idea. She closed her eyes, raised her index finger, and muttered something to herself.

“...!”

She put emphasis on the final part of whatever she was saying. Suddenly, a small fireball appeared above her finger. Whoa, wait a second. A fireball? It looked too real to be a party trick. How did she manage to get the fire to float in such a perfect sphere?

“... ...!”

Upon realizing my surprise, the girl smiled and started to make the fireball fly around the room. Clearly, this wasn't merely an illusion.

Was she using real magic?

“...?”

The blue-haired woman returned, spotted the fireball, and placed a hand on the girl's shoulder. The woman had a smile on her face, but the girl started sweating bullets and apologized over and over again. Within a moment, the fireball vanished.

She had real cat ears, a tail, and could make fire out of thin air—all traits thought to be scientifically impossible. Obviously, there was only one explanation for this: I was not in my own world.



Three months had passed since I realized I was in another world. I had finally grown more stable, so I was able to crawl around on my own. I now spent my days sneaking away from the maids, and crawled around the house in an attempt to gather information. What I learned only helped confirm my suspicions: that this was indeed not my world. Since there was magic and whatnot, it seemed logical to conclude I wasn't merely in a different country or continent; rather, I was in a completely different reality.

Throughout my life, I had assumed that if I were to go somewhere after death, it would have been hell. Being reborn into another world never crossed my mind. I've experienced a lot already, but life sure is full of mysteries.

Overall, this world seemed similar to medieval Europe in many ways. There was no electricity, so you'd need candles for light. Since people could use magic to produce fire at will, this didn't seem to be too big of a problem.

I had just snuck out of my room to investigate further, but I realized it was almost time for dinner. I quickly headed back to bed.

"Time to eat, so open wiide! I have lots of food for you! Say 'aaah!'"

I had started understanding more and more of what the maids were saying. They say babies learn fast, but my cat-eared friend here was likely the biggest reason. She was very talkative—almost to an annoying degree. Soon I learned quite a lot, including my own name: Sirius. That's what they called me. While it felt strange, that's how I got my new name. I had forgotten my own name from my previous life, so I decided to embrace my new identity.

"Would Sirius happen to be finished yet?"

The blue-haired maid, Erina, came in to check on us. I didn't know exactly how old she was, but she was definitely an older woman. As you'd expect, her mannerisms were about everything you'd look for in a maid.

"Yes, we just finished. I must say, Sirius has such great manners when eating. I thought feeding a baby would be much harder than this."

"Sirius is a special child. I am certain he will grow to be no less than a great man."

Erina was quite the doting parent. At first, I thought she was my mom. Based on the way the two maids talked, though, it seems I was wrong.

So a doting "parent" might not be correct, but the loving way she looked at me was definitely motherly.

"Yeah, it's almost like he understands us. And he's so cute too!"

The cat-eared maid, Noel, hardly ever took her eyes off me. She appeared to be younger—around 30—and still learning the ropes of the job from Erina. Despite

her age, there was still a sense of childishness to her.

“Do you think he’ll call me big sister? Oh, I’d love that so much.”

She was a bit of an idiot, to be honest.

“You can fantasize about that later. There is cleaning to be done.”

“On it!” Noel answered energetically as she burst off.

Erina gently picked me up and left the room. She continued down the hallway, taking me outside for the first time since I was reborn. I didn’t know how the seasons here worked yet, but it was nice and warm. Perfect weather for a pleasant afternoon nap.

“It’s warm today, isn’t it? Let’s go for a little walk.”

Erina slowly walked around the house. This was my first time seeing the place from the outside. It was a beautiful wooden house with three stories.

From the looks of things, I’d say it had at least six rooms. That made it a bit bigger than your standard house. The garden was also quite large, with various patches to grow vegetables and other botanicals. The house was surrounded by woods, and I couldn’t see any neighbors nearby. There seemed to be nothing but empty fields and trees beyond the house's front gate.

As I watched my surroundings, lost in thought, I spotted a red rabbit jump out from a nearby thicket.

“Sirius, look. That’s a Holabi. It’s quite a timid creature, but it’s still a monster. You should stay away from them.”

So there were monsters in this world. I figured as much after I'd learned that magic exists. In other words, it seemed like you could end up running into something like a dragon if you were unlucky.

I decided I’d start training to defend myself as soon as I was able to. Obviously, there wasn’t much I could do in terms of training as a baby. I also needed to be careful about how much growth I displayed. For example, I would start with crawling. After a while, I'd move to walking and, eventually, running.

“Erina.”

“Oh my, did you just finish pruning?”

“Yes.”

Erina turned as someone called out to her from behind. A man holding a pair of gardening shears walked forward. He had short, brown hair, and an intense stare. Between that and his tall stature, he didn't seem like the most sociable person. He was the type of person you'd hesitate to call out to when first meeting him.

“These aps seem ripe, so I picked them. I'll use them for dinner.”

“I see. Noel loves those, so I'm sure she'll be delighted.”

“Right.”

He didn't speak much, as if any form of speech was uncomfortable. His expression didn't change at all during the conversation either. He definitely seemed socially anxious. Erina must have noticed me watching him, because she held me out toward him and introduced us.

“Sirius, this is Dimas, our chef.”

“Erina, it's a baby. I doubt he understands.”

“That might be, but it's important for him to start recognizing the masters' helpers. Go ahead and introduce yourself.”

“Okay. You can call me Dii, Sirius.”

“Bii!”

He clearly did not expect me to reply and stared at me in shock. For some reason, I felt like I'd just won something.

“It will be fun watching him grow.”

“Yes, indeed.”

They both looked down at me. Internally, I promised myself that I'd train hard. I also thought about the two mysterious figures who were supposed to be vital to my future—my parents. I hadn't seen their faces since I was born; not even in a picture. I'd pretended that I hadn't noticed until now, but I was getting curious. Where and who were they?

I didn't know my parents in my past life. I couldn't even remember their faces. I grew up in an orphanage, although it was soon taken away from me when it blew up in a terrorist attack. I was rescued, but my savior had no love for children. He only knew how to train someone, not raise a child. I wanted to grow stronger, though, so I called him my master. He trained me well, although without a shred of love or mercy. I had my master to thank for surviving the harsh world of an agent for as long as I did.

At any rate, I was familiar with the feeling of not knowing my parents. This was nothing new to me. Besides, my mind was that of a 60-year-old man, so I didn't need parents to raise me. Plus, I was never lonely thanks to Erina and Noel.



Half a year had passed since I was reborn.

Like usual, I continued to sneak away from the maids in order to train. Well, calling it "training" might have been an exaggeration. I was only performing simple stretches that were safe for my young body. I was proceeding as planned. At the pace I was going, I would surely develop unrivaled mental and physical strength. I knew that it was a ridiculous plan, but I hadn't been the one to come up with it—actually, it came from my old master.

"If only I had found you when you were younger. I'd be able to make you into a perfect soldier. Even stronger than me."

"I doubt I would have survived your training back then."

"Well, that would have been a good learning experience, no?"

"But I'd be dead..."

He called it the "training program from hell." I never would have thought I'd actually end up doing it one day. The training program was very harsh, but that was perfect for my goal, so I went with it. Since babies grow so fast, I had fun

seeing how much I grew day by day.

I decided to show off my crawling for the first time. Noel's tail went stiff, and she jumped around in joy as she watched me. She raced off in an ecstatic frenzy, saying she wanted to show everyone. It was quite amusing. Even Erina joined in the celebration. She normally didn't drink much, but that day she had a glass of wine with her dinner, smiling from ear to ear. She began to dote on me even more from then on.



One year had passed since I was reborn.

My training was going well. I had started training my body through sit-ups and push-ups, and figured it was about time to start working on stamina. Soon, I could show them that I could walk.

“Sirius, look! Look over here!”

Noel was as energetic as always. Erina had told her time and time again that using magic around me was too dangerous, but Noel just loved to show her magic off. I wanted to learn how to use magic myself one day, so I always entertained her with grand reactions to keep her doing it.

“Oh god of flame, heed my call. Allow me to become thy emissary, and bring forth thy power: ‘Flame!’”

I'd seen her chant the same fireball spell time and time again, but it always amazed me.

“Hehehe, looks like big sis impressed you again, huh! That's the only spell I'm good at, though.”

Excuse me, big sis, but I can hear you.

I was still a grown man mentally, so I found her desperate attempts to entertain me cute. Erina ended up finding out again, and gave Noel yet another scolding.

The next day, I decided to try using magic after my regular workout. I mimicked exactly what Noel had done, including using the same words and everything, but nothing happened. Did I just need to concentrate more? Or did I need to do something else I wasn't aware of? I continued at it, but failed every time.

I decided to leave it for the time being and ask Noel once I could talk. Hopefully she wouldn't tell me that I wasn't cut out for it. After lunch, I started to set my plan into motion as I watched Noel and Erina knit beside me.

“Erina, Sirius is watching us.”

“He is indeed. Could he perchance be growing an interest in knitting?”

“Eriiii.”

“?!”

The knitting needles fell from Erina's grip as she froze up.

“Sirius, say it one more time. One more time, please.”

“Erinaaaa.”

“Ahh... ahh...”

She started to cry. Meanwhile, Noel jumped up and down, pointing at herself.

“Sirius, me! Dome! Noel! N-o-e-l!”

Just how desperate was she? It would have been fun calling Dii instead, but she looked so excited that I'd feel bad if I ignored her.

“Noel!”

“Eeek! Sirius, call me 'big sister' next! Please!”

She blurted out more nonsense in her excitement. I felt that she was more than hyper enough already, so I ignored her.

“Dii.”

“Yes?”

His expression was as emotionless as ever, but I could see the corner of his mouth curve slightly into a smile. I wasn't done yet, though. I got up on my legs,

and started wobbling towards the crying Erina.

“S-Sirius?!”

“He’s walking! Sirius is walking!”

I was able to walk around just fine, of course, but showing that off right away would be too much. I made sure to act like I was unsteady. I took five steps forward before “falling” into Erina’s arms, who hugged me so tightly I thought I would break in half.

“Amazing, Sirius! I’m sooo proud!”

“He’s a genius for sure! There’s no doubt, he’s a genius!”

I was hugged over and over by the maids. It hurt.

Dii looked like he wanted to calm them down, but he seemed just as excited in his own way. He muttered to himself that he’d make a big feast for dinner. Maybe I progressed a little too far too fast, but I needed to get started if I wanted my strategy to work. I stood still, letting the girls hug me until they got it out of their systems.

Erina had quite a lot of wine that night, so it was hard to calm her down in that state.

The next day, I walked and was once again showered in hugs and praise.

It gave me a feeling that maybe these people wouldn’t find it so strange if I did grow up faster than normal. The only thing that held me back was the fact that magic didn’t exist in my old world, so I had no idea how to practice. Since I could talk a little now, I decided to try getting an answer from Noel.

“I’ll show you a different spell today! Umm... this one shouldn’t be too dangerous.”

Noel showed up, brimming with confidence, though it seemed to quickly fade as she desperately flipped through a book called *A Beginner’s Guide to Magic*. Good job, Noel! That’s what I needed!

I looked up and pointed at the book to grab Noel’s attention.

“Huh? You want this? Umm... okay, wait one second.”

She rushed out of the room. She probably went to ask Erina for permission.

When I first met her, she never asked for permission for anything, but I guess she had grown a bit. She came back shortly after with a big smile, seemingly having gotten the green light. She sat me down on her lap, then opened the book in front of us so I could see.

I was filled with excitement, though that soon disappeared when I looked at the pages and remembered I couldn't read the text at all.

Noel started to read it out loud, which did help, though I decided my next priority would be learning to read.

"Let's see, 'Magic is the beginning of everything. While there is still much we don't know about it, magic is a gift granted to us all. Its potential is endless, and...' uh, I don't get this at all."

She smiled playfully. I couldn't read, so I wasn't much better, but that definitely wasn't something to be proud of. She could use magic, so she should have made an effort to understand it.

Noel continued the book for me. Unfortunately, between the fairly vague way the text was written and my inability to read, I struggled to keep up. Nonetheless, I did my best to understand as much as I could.

I found out that magic was created by an invisible force called mana. While you couldn't see mana physically, everything was made up of it, including humans.

It was through the use of that internal mana that Noel was able to create her fireballs. Apparently, it was also possible to draw special magic circles, which only needed some mana funneled into them to fire off a spell.

These spells would be weaker than the ones fired off manually. Instead, they were perfect for smaller tasks, like lighting rooms up. Through sketching a magic circle on a piece of paper, you could lay the paper around the house as makeshift lights, or use small flames for cooking.

The tools used to create these magic circles were called mana tools. There were other types of magic too, such as special spirit magic, which had the caster borrow power from a contracted spirit. This type of magic was much more

powerful, but interacting with or even just seeing a spirit was seemingly incredibly rare. It was said that if a spirit took a liking to you, they'd appear. With that said, no one really knew how to interact with a spirit, much less how to win their favor. Very few could use this type of magic.

Finally, there were the chants required for spells. The chant itself poured mana into the spell, and the spell's name would be the trigger to fire it off. The spell Noel had used before, "Flame," was obviously a fire-type spell, and the chant was written down in the book she showed me.

Using your mana to cast a spell would deplete your internal mana storage, and using too much would cause great exhaustion, or even death in extreme cases. The amount of mana someone could store internally varied greatly from person to person, and even years of practice would do little in terms of increasing the capacity. The only way would be to cast spells until you expend all your mana, and repeat the process over and over, much like how weight training breaks down and builds new muscle.

According to the book, half a year of hard work would probably just result in being able to cast one extra spell, so I needed to get started on training my mana capacity as soon as possible. A thought occurred to me: if your own mana capacity was low, could you not just use mana from external sources? The book said mana existed all around us, after all. Luckily, I found the answer later in the book—the mana found around the world didn't have the same purity as the source inside us; therefore, it was unusable without purification. Doing so required a lot of mana by itself, so you ended up without much surplus at the end. In addition, your internal mana storage had one final limitation: "mana affinity."

This, too, was determined at birth, and could not be changed by any means.

Noel's ability to use "Flame" so easily came from her affinity toward fire. With the fire affinity, one would excel at using fire magic, while using water would be very difficult. In other words, knowing how to use your mana affinity to your advantage would be the best approach to magic. Your affinity did not limit you from using other types of magic, but their power would be weakened drastically.

After finishing that section, Noel closed the book.

I had been focusing intently and didn't notice how long we'd been reading.

“Phew! Let's stop here for today. I'm beat!”

“Good work, Noel. I've made some tea, so how about you take a break and relax?”

“Erina?!”

Erina's voice came from behind us. She wore a gentle smile and carried a tea set in her hands. I had been really caught up in the book, but I felt ashamed for not noticing someone sneaking up on me.

“I'll look after Sirius, so you can go rest.”

“Thank you very much. Come here, Sirius. Time to move!”

Noel handed me over to Erina, who sat me down on her lap. She gently patted my head as she accepted the book from Noel.

“You were such a good student! I'm sure you'll be able to use magic in no time.”

“Haha, no waaay! Even I struggle with the elementary stuff, and he can't even read!”

“True, but he's impressed us before.”

“Right, he has. But I still think it'll take a few years.”

Well, now I had to prove them wrong! My first priority was to learn how to read.

“Oh hey, Erina, what do you think Sirius's affinity is?”

“We could check at this very moment. Could you bring the mana tool for it?”

“Got it! I'll bring it right away!”

Noel ran off and returned shortly after holding what appeared to be a mat of sorts. It had an intricate crest on it, with a crystal in the centre. The crest was most likely the magic circles the book had mentioned

“Let's see, pour in some mana, and it'll work... there! It's ready!”

“Sirius, please place your hand here.”

Based on what they were talking about, and what I had learned from the book, this mana tool would be able to find out my mana affinity. All I had to do was place my hand on the crystal at the center. I felt a little nervous, but did as I was told. The moment I did, a white light erupted from the crystal.

“Erina, what’s happening?!”

“What? That can’t be...”

Noel stared at the crystal in confusion, then tried placing her own hand on it instead. As she did, the crystal lit up bright red; she let out a sigh of relief.

“It’s not broken... phew. So, Sirius’s affinity is... colorless.”

The way she said that made me feel worried. Was it a big deal? Was it bad? Tears began to form in the corners of Erina’s eyes, and she hugged me tightly.

“I’ll... I’ll always be by your side, Sirius!”

“Me too!”

What the hell did it mean for it to be colorless?! I cursed my own inability to ask what was happening as my two maids showered me in even more hugs than usual.



A few months had passed since I had been deemed “colorless.” Erina and Noel doted on me even more than before. Other than that, nothing had really changed. After having Noel and Erina read for me, I finally got to a point where I could read by myself. It was definitely weird for a one year old to be reading, but Erina didn’t seem surprised; she just praised me as her little genius. She even went as far as to bring me various books to read.

Thankfully, her persistent pampering only made things easier for me, and I continued reading book after book undisturbed. As expected, civilization here was similar to my old world, but with some magical elements mixed in. Science as I knew it was not really a thing, though alchemy was a widespread equivalent

here. This world really seemed like something out of a fantasy novel, with magic, swords and all that. The seasons were the same as back home, and one year had 360 days.

People were divided by social status, such as nobles and commoners. There were various demi-human races mixed in with humans, like Noel. Lastly, it was a very dangerous world that had wild monsters roaming about.

In order to make it through such a harsh world, I had to start training my magic capabilities as soon as possible. Unfortunately, I soon ran into a problem.

I skimmed through the part about mana affinity in the book Noel lent me.

Each affinity was represented by a color—fire was red, water was blue, wind was green, and earth was yellow. Finally, there was colorless, like me. What that meant was that I had no mana affinity. It did not mean that I had the ability to use all magic well, or something like that; far from it. It meant that all the negatives of affinities applied to me, with no positives. Mana tools could be activated regardless of one's affinity, so I could do that, at least, but... it wasn't good.

"I see, that's a bummer."

I was skimming through a book called *Albert's Journey*, which was about an adventurer who traveled the world, noting down information about various customs about the places he visited. It had info on areas ravaged by tornadoes year-round, secret rituals performed by the silver wolf clan, rare races with multiple tails, and so on. The point was, it had a lot of information about things that should most definitely have been impossible to record.

Among it was a chapter titled "Colorless," which piqued my interest.

This happened a few years after I became an adventurer. Up until then, I had made several interesting discoveries—sometimes daily—as a result of meeting all sorts of races. It wasn't all fun and games, however. In one of the towns I visited, I met a person without any mana affinity. They were deemed useless, and were treated horribly by their fellow townsfolk. There are many people in this world who have no magical capabilities whatsoever, so why was this person ostracized simply for the lack of an affinity?

The point was, a colorless affinity didn't mean I couldn't use magic. The light from the mana tool had been quite weak when I touched it, which probably meant my mana capacity was below average too. Since someone with a colorless affinity had the drawbacks of every color, it meant using even the most simple of magic would be a struggle. In other words, I had my work cut out for me.

But that didn't seem like too bad of a hurdle. After all, I had knowledge and experience from a world totally different from this one, and that gave me a big advantage.

Also, if my opponents knew about my lack of an affinity, they might underestimate me. I felt confident that I could take down any foe as long as I knew their weakness and had a knife in hand. I wanted to try out using magic for myself, though, so I decided to start with something simple as an introduction. A colored spell like "Flame" would probably be too difficult, though.

There were a few colorless spells, though they were apparently almost never used. The introductory spell in the colorless section was "Light." As you'd expect from the name, it was a simple spell that created a tiny bead of light that could illuminate a small area. The book had various long and tedious spells too, but I decided to settle for "Light" to begin with.

"Hi, Sirius! It's me, your beloved big sister Noel! What seems to be the problem? Do you want to call me big sis, by any chance?"

As I prepared to attempt the spell, the idiot appeared. She really, really wanted me to call her "big sis." Since the day I started to talk, she kept checking in on me to see if I could say it yet. I'd refused, since it would have felt like admitting defeat if I did. At any rate, I had an audience with Noel's appearance—why not put on a show?

"Noel! Magiic."

"M-Magic? W-Well..."

After she learned that I was colorless, Noel had stopped showing off her magic around me. I knew she did it to spare my feelings. Regardless, I was determined, and pointed to the open page in the book with the "Light" spell.

"Magic~"

“Hm, that one is colorless, so... okay! I’ll show you!”

There you go, Noel! There's the big dummy I love!

“I haven’t really used colorless spells before. If I need light I can just make a fire...”

I didn’t know how bright “Light” would be, but based on what Noel was saying, I realized not to get my hopes up. Noel glanced at the page, closed her eyes, and started to cast the spell.

“Oh great devil, send thy powers forth. Place thy hand in mine and bring forth the light to banish the darkness! ‘Light!’”

The chant felt longer than what I’d heard previously, perhaps because colorless spells weren't as heavily researched as colored ones. Regardless, Noel finished the chant, and a ball of light appeared above her index finger. It was about the size of a baseball, and light flowed from it like liquid. It was quite a beautiful sight.

When I reached out to touch it, I was surprised—not only was there no heat, as you’d expect from a light source, but it felt incredibly strange. It was indescribable, really. Was that how pure mana felt like?

After a bit, Noel started to sweat, making it clear that she was getting tired. I let go, signaling that she could stop. The light vanished, and Noel was left looking quite exhausted.

“Phew! Using colorless magic sure wears you out, huh? I never get this tired from using fire.”

From what I could tell, she seemed pretty tired whenever she used fire spells, too. Perhaps colorless spells just used more mana? When I’d touched the ball of light, it felt like something was seeping out of it—like water from a tap. That must have been mana. I had a feeling each mana affinity had some special attributes when it came to casting spells with them. That was something I was aiming to look into later on.

“Noel, amazing!”

“Keep the praise coming! I’m the best big sis around!”

I started to clap, which made Noel just about explode with joy. The idiot was

getting carried away again. Classic Noel-ism.

She eventually calmed down and left, saying she had more work to do. I was alone again, so I started trying to use magic myself. Noel showed me how it was done, so I felt confident I could do it too.

“Oh great devil, send thy powers forth. Place thy hand in mine and bring forth the light to banish the darkness...”

I pictured a similar sphere like the one Noel made as I started chanting. Heat started spreading through my body, pooling at the tip of my fingers, and I uttered the spell’s name.

“Light!”

A sphere of light appeared above my hand out of thin air. A second later, the heat left my body, probably signifying the expenditure of my mana. I was pretty stunned—I was genuinely using magic. Magic was still a mystery to me, but now that the orb was floating above my head, I could no longer deny its existence.

I wanted to try out what Noel did with her “Flame” spell, and thought about the sphere flying around the room. Sure enough, it moved just the way I wanted. I thought it would be hard, but moving it actually proved quite easy. I was about to make it fly up higher when it suddenly vanished.

“Huh? I didn’t mean to do that...”

I tilted my head in confusion, and my vision started to get blurry. I quickly realized that I was about to collapse. I tried to brace myself for the fall, but my body refused to listen. I was overwhelmed with a strong sense of exhaustion, and I crumpled on my bed.

“I see. I... ran out of mana...”

I had read about it in the book—it was called mana exhaustion. It stated that if you weren’t careful, mana exhaustion could be fatal. I felt like if I really wanted to, I could have forced myself to move again, but there was no reason to do that. Thankfully, I was on my bed already. Since there was nothing strange about a baby sleeping, I didn’t need to worry about Noel and Erina’s concern.

Thinking about it, Noel always stopped her spells when she got visibly tired.

Considering I was a mere baby, it was no surprise that moving the spell that much made me collapse. I had been able to maintain the spell for about 10 seconds. The light wasn't much to brag about, either—it was about the same amount of light as a candle. At the very least, I wanted to make it shine as brightly as a lightbulb.

As I thought about all the different aspects of using magic, I passed out.

The next day, I woke up feeling well rested and refreshed—if anything, I felt better than the day before. I felt like I had new mana stored up, so I chose to go back to experimenting right away. I had passed out rather suddenly last night, so I wanted to test my boundaries today. Knowing your limits was essential to combat, after all. For example, you wouldn't be of much use if you passed out in front of your enemy.

That's why I made this my top priority.

As I cast the “Light” spell again, I simply remained focused on maintaining the spell for as long as I could. While I was concentrating, I constantly felt like something was being sucked out of my body. It was as if a bloodsucking leech was drinking my blood. The exhaustion intensified by the second, and I eventually decided to end the spell. With a mere thought, the spell vanished.

I felt incredibly exhausted, but was able to stay upright just fine.

I made sure to remember the feeling, concluding that it must have been the moment right before mana exhaustion. The next step would be to wait until I recovered, and repeat the process without mana exhaustion happening. And with that, training my mana capacity became a part of my training regiment.



My training continued; before long, I was four. Naturally, walking and running came easily to me now.. I was running back and forth in the garden, and had just finished my quota for the day.

“Phew, that’s enough for today.”

I was doing interval training, going from a gentle run to a full dash in seconds, then repeating the process. It was a great way to see results fast, but it was also incredibly tiring, so I made sure not to push myself too far. After I finished, I started to do some gentle exercises to cool down.

“Haah... haah... S-Sirius... why don’t you... look tired?”

“Well, you lack stamina. Also, I told you to take it at your own pace.”

Noel came over and insisted on running with me today, but she ended up quitting halfway through, exhausted. She was on the ground next to me, gasping for air.

“B-But I’m... your big sis, I can’t... show weakness... Ugh?!”

She could only take half of one workout. Was my regiment really that harsh? I shook my head at Noel as she writhed around on the ground. Erina walked over with towels and cups of water.

“Good work, Sirius.”

“Thank you, Erina.”

Meanwhile, Dii walked over to care for Noel. The two of them were complete opposites personality wise, but actually got along very well. They were about the same age too.

“Don’t push yourself.”

“Thanks Dii.”

I glanced over at the two with a smile, and Erina did the same. I decided to leave the two of them alone for a bit and went to get washed up. When I reached the well, I briefly looked at my reflection in the water. My black hair and gentle features made me look more cute than anything else. I didn’t look half bad. But I also felt like I was lacking in my current state. People judge others based on appearance, so it was important to me to bulk up a little to not look like a push-over. After quickly washing up, I started my magic training for the day.

Physical training was important, but I couldn’t neglect my magic either. I began to show off my magic capabilities when I was three, which made Dii and

the maids freeze in shock.

“Sirius? We’re heading back to the kitchen to prepare dinner, so please take care of Noel for us.”

“Got it. I’ll head back inside once I’m done training too.”

“Hey, why am I the one being cared for, huh?! Sirius, don’t nod! Hey, Erina?!”

Erina grabbed Dii and ushered him inside, leaving me with Noel. She was poking the ground and sulking to herself.

“Why am I left with a bodyguard who’s a tenth of my age...?”

“Come on, Noel—don’t look so grim. Come help me with magic. You’re the only one I can rely on for this, you know?”

“Huh?! The only one?! H-Haha! That’s right! Well, I have no choice then!”

A bit of praise quickly improved her mood. I wasn’t lying, though. She was the best at using magic between the three of them. Using magic like this right after finishing a workout was pretty tough, even for me, but it was a great way to improve. I could tell my mana capacity had grown already.

At first, I could only maintain “Light” for about 10 seconds, but now I was able to keep it up for a whole minute. Noel praised me a lot, and said this level of growth was really rare. I’m sure the fact that I got started at such an early age had something to do with it, but the most important factor was that I kept at it every day, no matter what. My mana seemed to regenerate a little faster than most people, which let me recover from mana exhaustion more quickly, and in turn grow faster too.

I had learned two more spells, so I still didn’t know much. The reason was simply because that the book Noel had gotten me just didn’t have more than three colorless spells in it. The ones I had learned were “Impact” and “String”. I had already mastered them, thanks to Noel. The first spell, “Impact,” was fairly simple: you hardened your mana and hurled it at an opponent, striking them with it. Sadly, the spell wasn’t very strong, and wouldn’t do all that much. The reason was quite simple—since mana didn’t have any mass, it was difficult to harden it to a point where it would inflict any real damage. The result was about the same as being hit with a rubber ball. To make matters worse, it was slow and

lacked range; it simply dispersed after traveling for a few seconds. Simply throwing a rock would be more effective, so it was a fairly useless spell.

Then there was “string,”—a spell that let you create magic strings. In theory, you could wrap it around things to pull them closer or bind things together. However, maintaining the spell proved to be quite difficult, and the strings would often snap from just a little tension. I could barely pull anything towards me without the strings breaking.

“Light” was usable as a light source, as one would expect, but it used up quite a lot of mana. Plus, it was a fairly weird spell to use. A spell like “Flame” would be much better at lighting up an area. In other words, colorless spells were quite awkward, but that really just came down to how you used them, in my opinion. For me, it would be difficult to use spells with other affinities, so I had to master every colorless spell I was able to.

Experimenting with unique usages for the spells would come later. For now, I simply focused on improving my mana capacity and my physical strength.

All right, it was time to exhaust my mana before dinner!

I headed over to a nearby tree and prepared to hurl “Impact” at it.

“Oh great creator, devil that grants me life! I ask thee for power... ‘Impact!’”

A sphere the size of a baseball appeared in my hand, and as I fired it off, it shook lightly in the air before striking its target. It was possible to manipulate the size of the sphere too, but doing so made the spell very difficult to control. Colorless spells in general were already hard to use, so making it any bigger would make the spell nearly unusable.

Instead, I continued firing off several of that size until I felt tired. Last time I managed to fire off nine, but this time I did 10, so I was happy to see improvement. But the exhaustion that followed was as overwhelming as ever. As I tried to catch my breath and collect myself, Noel called out to me.

“What is it, Noel?”

“Oh, I was just impressed that you can use ‘mpact’ so well already.”

“Really? It’s a fairly weak spell though, so I don’t know.”

“It might be, but it’s still impressive, especially considering your age. Are you really four? Are you sure you haven’t used some dark magic to hide the fact that you’re actually 10?”

She wasn’t wrong—I was technically hiding my real age, but she had been with me since birth. At what point would I have cast the spell to trick her?

“It’s all thanks to you, Noel. You’re the one who taught me how to do it, after all.”

“Thanks to me?! Yes, I did it! Angering Erina all those times paid off after all!”

One complement and the Noel-ism kicked in. Classic. I really was thankful for her help, though. It was definitely thanks to her that I had gotten this far. I was exhausted, but found the strength to grab Noel and drag her with me back into the house.

My fourth year after being reborn. I spent my time playing with Noel, being watched over by Erina, and enjoying Dii’s cooking. We were separated from the rest of the world, but I loved it at that house. It was my own patch of paradise.

But... no paradise lasts forever. The sound of oncoming destruction loomed over us.

A few days later.

I got up at the usual time, got dressed, and headed to the kitchen to have breakfast.

“Good morning!”

“Good morning!”

As I greeted the others, I noticed that something was off. Noel and Dii weren’t wearing their usual uniforms—they were dressed in normal clothing.

“Are you going shopping?”

“Yes. All our mana ovens broke this morning. It’s quite sudden, but I’m having the two of them head out to buy new ones.”

We were pretty much able to sustain ourselves, though there were some things we were unable to create on our own. Usually, we would have someone head into

town once every month or so. I hadn't gone yet, but I knew it took about half a day to get there; so spending the night in town and coming back would amount to a two day journey.

It made me wonder why we were situated out here in the middle of nowhere. It wasn't like it was an inconvenience for me or anything, so I had never asked. The mana ovens were magic tools created much like the ovens in the old world, albeit powered by mana. It was a very nifty addition to the kitchen, so I understood why they wanted to get new ones. What I didn't understand, however, was their sense of urgency.

"We have Noel to help with fire, so is it really that important to go get new ones?"

"There's another errand that I forgot about, so I'm having them do that too while they're out."

Erina forgot something? That was new. Still, I decided not to ask any more questions. They had taken care of me since birth, after all, so I didn't want to cause any unnecessary trouble. I was a bit worried about what we'd use for fire without Noel around, but we had some fire stones lying around that we could use.

A fire stone was a special stone that would instantly catch on fire when broken with a hammer. The only problem with them was that they had to be just the right size, or else the flames wouldn't be hot enough to really do much, but we had enough to get by.

"Got it. Be careful, you two."

"We will. Don't cry just because I'm gone for a bit, okay?"

"We'll be careful."

Dii used to be an adventurer, so he was an experienced traveller. They had gone shopping many times without any issues already, so I didn't see a reason to worry.

After eating breakfast, the two of them got ready and set off. I got right to training after they left, but finished a little earlier than usual. Not sure what to do with my time, I decided to sit down in the garden and read. That's when Erina

came over.

“Sirius, the weather is so nice today. Why don’t we eat out here today?”

Erina had prepared sandwiches for lunch. Dii’s sandwiches were tasty for sure, but Erina’s were something else. I especially liked the way she mixed meat and vegetables just perfectly. I used to love cooking in my old world, so I wanted to ask her to teach me some day.

“Here’s some tea.”

As I was finishing my lunch, Erina mixed some berries into a tea cup and handed it to me. Initially, I enjoyed the sweet taste, but I soon noticed something was off.

“Hey, Erina? Could you get me some aps? I’d like some dessert.”

An ap was a small fruit that looked like an apple, though tasted more like a strawberry. Noel loved them.

“Very well. I’ll go fetch some at once.”

Erina smiled and headed back into the house. Making sure she was totally out of sight, I instantly spat out the tea. The moment I had started drinking it, I had noticed a strange taste mixed in. Maybe I was overly paranoid, but it tasted like sleeping pills. But that made no sense... Why would she try to drug me?

Erina quickly returned, so I stopped thinking about it and tried to act natural. I waited for a bit before I started to stretch and yawn, feigning sleepiness.

“Sirius, are you tired?”

After I “fell asleep,” Erina started shaking me. Since I suspected she had tried to drug me, I knew I shouldn’t wake up that easy. She lifted me up and started to move.

“Hehe, you’re so heavy. You sure have grown up fast.”

She whispered motherly words in my ear as she carried me into my room. After gently laying me down in bed, she stroked my hair a few times.

“I’m so sorry for doing this to you, darling. Once you wake up, everything will be over, so please forgive me. I promise to protect you..”

So it was Erina, after all. What was happening? Why did she sound so serious? First there was the sudden “shopping trip,” and now this? Something was up. At the very least, I could clearly tell that she wasn’t doing this to harm me in any way. Back in my old life, I had encountered way too many people who hid their animosity behind fake smiles. But I could tell her love was genuine and sincere. I wasn’t related to her by blood, but she truly felt like a mother to me.

She rubbed my cheek one last time, then reluctantly left the room. I waited a few seconds, then opened my eyes..

“Everything will be over when I wake up, huh?”

Something was definitely going to happen, and it would be dangerous. Depending on the severity of the situation, I might have jumped in to help. I tried to listen for any sounds outside my room, but heard noises coming from outside my window instead.

First, there was the sound of a carriage and horses. Then, there was the sound of a strange man’s voice. We hadn’t had a single visitor since I was born. Was this the reason Erina had everyone leave the house?

I glanced out the window and spotted a carriage drawn by several horses. The carriage door opened and an old man stepped out. He was wearing fancy-looking clothing and had a beard you’d expect to see on stuck-up nobles. He was a little overweight and had an air to him that instantly made me feel like he couldn’t be trusted.

The man walked toward the entrance to the house. I leaned up against the wall and heard two sets of footsteps make their way through the house. It was a little hard to hear from here, so I quietly snuck out of my room and headed toward Erina’s to hear them more clearly. The doors in this house were quite thin, so I was able to hear them quite clearly by leaning against it..

“Thank you so much for coming.”

“Hmph. This place will never cease to be a headache to find.”

The first thing I noticed was the change in Erina’s tone. Unlike her usual tone, it had no emotion at all; she sounded like a robot. The man sounded just like I expected—stuck up and full of himself, like the type of asshole leader who truly

looked down on those below him. I tried to stop thinking and simply focused on their conversation.

| Erina |

Alas, the day came yet again... I would have been delighted if we never saw this man again. Unfortunately, we needed him.

“Thank you so much for coming.”

“Hmph. This place will never cease to be a headache to find.”

Rich words from the man who forced us to move here to begin with.

“Hey, where’s the awkward kid and the demi-human? How dare they not even come out to greet me?”

“They’re in town today. They should return tomorrow.”

“Oh, okay. Whatever. Just seeing that demi-human bitch makes my skin crawl anyways.”

Yet he wanted her to come greet him? He could never make up his mind, and the way he discriminated against Noel never failed to anger me.

He was just the same as he’d always been—driven by his own selfish urges, he flitted from woman to woman, never settling down. According to the information Dii had collected in town recently, he had stuck his nose where it didn’t belong and found himself in quite a scandalous predicament.

“Where’s the runt? His dad shows up and he doesn’t even come out to greet me?”

“Sirius came down with a fever this morning, so he’s resting in his room.”

“Sick? I don’t need weaklings. What good will a weak pawn do me?”

Pawn?! Sirius is not your pawn, you swine! This man had forced himself on just about every affluent girl he could find. When Sirius was born as a result, he dared to delegate his son to the status of a mere tool? My desire to strike him

was practically overwhelming, yet the harsh truth remained the same—he still was Sirius’s legal father, and he was the one who provided the money we needed to get by. I had to endure it, for Sirius’s sake.

“Well, whatever. I don’t need him.”

“What do you mean?”

“My wife had another son, so things should be financially easier from now on.”

“C-Congratulations...”

Sirius might have been illegitimate, but he still was the man’s second son. He had been sending money for us to raise him, just in case something should happen to his first born. Did Sirius mean nothing anymore now that his “legitimate” second son had been born? Did he really look at Sirius as a mere pawn he no longer had use for? I’d never want Sirius to come into this man’s talons, of course, but his money was what allowed us to raise the boy safely. Giving Sirius a safe and happy life was the only thing I cared about.

He was still only four years old. I had to protect him.

“I’ve really had bad luck with kids after all. Got nothing but girls. They’re not totally useless, but I want a son for my heir, you know? Hey, get this:my kid’s only five and he’s able to write already! It’ll be fun watching him grow up, hahaha!”

That’s impressive in its own right, but Sirius could write when he was only two. I knew Sirius’s growth had been unnaturally fast, which might have brought scorn from outsiders, but all that mattered to me was keeping my beloved boy safe.

Seeing him grow brought me nothing but joy. I wanted to watch over him for as long as I lived. Because of his potential, I was sure that Sirius would be able to make it on his own in the world eventually. Perhaps when he turned 10... no, 20 would be safer. Until then, I had to do whatever I could to keep him safe.

“Wow, that is very impressive. I’ve taken care of many children in my day, and your son certainly sounds gifted.”

“Yeah, now I don’t have to worry about finding an heir anymore.”

“But what of their health? I heard Dii say there’s a virus spreading quickly throughout the town at the moment.”

“Hm? Right. My oldest is fine, and my second was just born, so...”

“Sirius hasn’t caught anything, by the way. His fever came from pushing himself a little too much during his studies, that’s all. And you know how dangerous those viruses can be for newborns, so...”

“Right. You’re saying you want me to keep paying for the brat in case something happens to my new kid?”

“That is correct.”

There’s always the chance that his newborn could catch something. I knew I had to use that against him to ensure Sirius remained taken care of. My only wish was to keep Sirius safe, no matter the cost.

“While he’s not as gifted as your firstborn, Sirius also shows great potential. I promise. If something were to happen, he would make for a great heir.”

“That slut’s kid? She was pretty, but that’s about the only thing she had going for her.”

What the hell did this boorish swine know?! In an attempt to keep my anger at bay, I clenched my fists under the table; they tightened so much that it started to hurt.

“I will do my best to raise him to be a perfect heir for you, so please continue supporting us until he has turned 20.”

“Hmph, as if! Let’s see... sure, I’ll help the brat until my newborn has safely turned six. After that, I’ll have no use for this thing, so I’ll be kicking him out. You got that?”

To hear him speak so poorly of Sirius caused my temper to flare. I found myself reflexively jolting up and glaring at him.

“He’d still be just a child at that point! At least wait until he’s 20...”

“Out of my way!”

The man didn’t take kindly to my rebuttal, and shoved me into a desk in the

corner of the room. Various tools and bottles were knocked off the table and clattered to the floor. I noticed that several vials of medicine I'd spent a long time preparing had spilled to the ground, but that meant nothing to me right now.

"Please, I beg you! He's your son!"

"I don't consider the result of the time I spent with that whore to be my son! Be grateful I'm giving him six years here! Or would you prefer me to kick him out right now?!"

"Very well."

Just how useless was I? Oh mistress, please forgive me.

"Here's the money for the brat. And don't you dare cry about it, you're not getting a penny more."

The man threw a coin purse on the ground in front of me. Feeling defeated, I opened it and checked the contents. It was significantly less than last time. Things would be very difficult for us moving forward.

"Hmph. Checking the money right away, huh? What a greedy bitch."

He could call me whatever foul name he pleased. I couldn't care less about myself. All that mattered was Sirius's safety.

"I think I'll leave now. I hope you've learned from this."

"... Very well."

I silently watched him leave. I didn't utter a noise until I was certain the carriage had left, then I let out a sigh. It felt as though my soul left through my lips. At least I had managed to keep Sirius from seeing that horrible man. If he knew his father was such a horrible, selfish wretch, who knows how badly it would have affected him?. I needed to get up and prepare some fresh tea for Sirius. He would be waking shortly.

I felt terrible, but I knew that once I saw his face again, it would all be blown away. I wasn't able to make him agree to my terms, but there was nothing that could be done about it. Once Sirius woke up, he wouldn't know anything about what happened here. He'dl smile and laugh just like normal, and that innocence would surely make me feel better. We only had six years left of this paradise.

He was still too young to talk about such matters. On top of that, I wasn't sure how much longer my body would last. Oh mistress, what should I have done?

| Sirius |

When they had finished speaking, I snuck back into my room to make sure I wouldn't be noticed. I could barely wrap my head around it, but... that piece of filth was my father.

I could see why Erina wanted to keep me away from him. Based on their chat, I knew I meant literally nothing to him. I didn't want to see him, either, so I chose to just forget about it. What mattered to me was what I learned about Erina—she truly was my savior. The only problem now was where I stood. I had a horrible father, and based on what I'd heard, I definitely wouldn't be getting any noble status from him. Not to mention that this wonderful paradise would be ending in just six years.

Six years was a long time to train and get stronger, but I'd still be too young to get by on my own out in the world. And what if the others were kicked out too? There was no point thinking about that now. I had two important things to do: first, I needed to train even harder. I needed to get stronger to take care of myself in the future. My goal was to get as strong as I had been in my previous life. That would likely be enough to survive in this world, as well.

Second, I needed to tell the others the truth.

I knew for sure that Erina was on my side, and I'd grown up with Noel and Dii, so they were definitely on my side as well. I wanted to start telling them my secret over time; perhaps in six months or so. For starters, I had to come up with a good excuse for why I had so much knowledge from my previous life. Starting right off the bat with "I'm from another world!" would be too much. I went to bed that night trying to come up with a good excuse.

"Hmm... this works."

It took some time, but I managed to come up with a plan. As I sat up in my

bed to stretch, I noticed that Erina still hadn't come to my room yet. Maybe she was kicking herself over not being able to convince the man to her terms. I decided to go check on her. I didn't know how powerful the drug she gave me was supposed to be, but I figured it would be about time for me to wake up.

I headed over to her room and opened the door. As I did, I found Erina collapsed on the floor.

"Erina!" I shouted as I rushed over to her.

She was hot to the touch. Too hot. She was unconscious, breathing heavily, and covered in sweat. I didn't know what was wrong, so I didn't want to move her too much. Still, I couldn't leave her on the ground by herself.

It took some time, but I managed to drag her over to her bed.

I had taken some medical classes in my day, but this was a totally different world, so my knowledge was most likely useless. I didn't want to make things worse, so I just stuck to the basics. She seemed to have collapsed on her way to make tea, as the kitchen was a mess. For starters, I knew I had to get her some water to keep her from getting dehydrated.

I grabbed an ap from the counter, peeled it, then squeezed it into a cup. The juice from an ap had lots of good vitamins in it which would hopefully help her recover faster. Next, I grabbed a rag and dipped it in cold water. When I returned to the room, Erina was awake, looking as pale as a ghost.

"Sirius... I'm sorry..."

"Shh, don't worry about it. Here, drink this."

I had her drink the contents of the cup slowly but surely. She finished about half, then put the cup away. I grabbed the cloth and started slowly wiping off her sweat before placing it on her forehead.

"Thank you, I feel much better."

"Don't mention it. What happened?"

I read about that in Albert's Journey. He said he had found a lot of villages plagued by the illness, and the mortality rate was incredibly high. I knew it was a serious disease, but I didn't know any details.

“Do you have any medicine for it?”

“There usually is medicine for it in the house, but I had a small accident earlier and it spilled.”

Erina looked over at her desk, where broken vials lay shattered below. I’d heard some loud noises in the middle of their talk earlier. Had that filth pushed her into the desk, destroying the medicine in the process?

“But don’t worry, I’ll be fine. I just have to hold on until Dii and Noel come back.”

Erina firmly gripped my hand.

“I heard a rumor this illness is spreading quickly nowadays, so I told them to pick up some extra medicine too. I’ll be fine if I just hold out until tomorrow.”

“I see. That’s good.”

“This disease normally only affects people with water affinity, but I don’t know about someone who’s colorless. You could catch it too, so stay away from me until the others get back.”

“That’s not happening. I won’t leave you alone like this. I’ll do what I can to help until they get here.”

“Very... well. Thank... you.”

Erina barely managed to finish the sentence before she passed out again. Would she really be able to make it another day in this state? At least I knew the name of the disease now, so I could start reading about it to find some info. Erina was well-versed in medicine, so it only took a few minutes of skimming through her bookshelves to find a book that could help. Unfortunately, in this world, magic was the primary form of treatment for injuries and illness, so the book was surprisingly thin. They just didn’t need as much medical research as in my old world.

Luckily, the book still had some info about the disease.

Mana pollution: An illness where a person’s mana starts leaking out.

Symptoms include high fever and temporary paralysis.

It is highly infectious towards people with water affinity.

It is curable with medicine made from ground up mana leaves.

If left untreated, the patient will die after half a day as a result of complete mana depletion.

It is a terrifying disease, and the recovery rate is minimal.

She clearly told me not to worry to put me at ease. This disease was incredibly serious. I wanted to throw the book at the wall and scream, but I had to set my anger aside and focus on helping her.

She didn't have any visible symptoms until that morning, which meant her mana would run out by nighttime. In other words, I didn't have time to wait for Dii and Noel to return the next day. I had to do something myself before it was too late.

I read through the book again. I needed a herb called mana leaf in order to make her medicine.

I grabbed another book on medicinal plants and flipped through the pages until I found what I was looking for.



Mana leaf. Its name comes from its mana-absorbing properties. It has a very distinct shape and is easily recognizable. It's a very potent ingredient for healing elixirs and medicine.

They are a common aquatic plant, and can easily be found in most lakes and similar bodies of water.

On the next page, there was a hand-drawn picture of the herb, which I made sure to remember.

I started to prepare to go look for some. First, I needed a weapon to defend myself.

The only one who carried a weapon in this house was Dii, and he wasn't home.

Improvising, I grabbed a knife from the kitchen. It wasn't ideal, but it was better than nothing. I didn't need any special tools, or anything; simply picking the herb by hand was more than enough. I grabbed a small bag for the herbs, left some extra water next to Erina, and headed out. It was already dark out by the time I left.

Luckily, it was a full moon, so I was able to make out my immediate surroundings in the moonlight.

I headed for the forest next to our house. I could remember Dii telling me of a nearby river. The herb could grow in any small body of water, so that was likely a good place to start. Walking through a forest that was potentially filled with various monsters was scary, but thinking about saving Erina was enough to make me move forward.

The forest was very dense, and I quickly started to feel tired from trekking through it. I was very used to trekking through forests in my old life, but I was still stuck in a four-year-old body, so I was fairly limited by that.

I found the river, but I couldn't find any herbs there. It seemed like finding a lake was my best bet, like the book said. I made sure to mark the ground where I

came from with a stick as I followed the river downstream. After about twenty minutes of walking, the river sped up and led down into a big lake.

The lake seemed to split up into several smaller rivers, one of which I had followed. As I started walking toward the lake, I felt a strange presence nearby. I looked over to a nearby thicket, where a single green head was poking out and staring at me. I squinted to take a better look at what appeared to be a goblin.

It was about one meter tall and had nothing but some simple linen cloth tied around its waist. According to the books I'd read since I got here, goblins were both dumber and weaker than humans; but they also reproduced very quickly, so they rarely traveled alone. They lived off of meat and even ate humans when they could. If they came across human women, they would assault and impregnate them, which was why they were nicknamed "woman hunters."

Defeating a goblin by yourself would easily grant you the title of a beginner adventurer, though taking one down as a four-year-old seemed impossible. And, as if that wasn't enough, I spotted two more near the first one. They didn't look very bulky and slow, so they'd be on me in no time if I didn't hurry. I was limited to the capabilities of a young body, even though it was a well-trained one. Catching them by surprise was my only chance of winning. I gripped the knife and got ready.

First, I picked up a small rock and tossed it behind the goblins. They quickly turned to the sound, and I used the chance to sneak up to them. I was good at stealth, and the wind would help cover my scent. Still, I wasn't completely safe—they could turn back for whatever reason, so I had to hurry. Just as the closest goblin turned toward me, I lunged at his chest.

He spotted me, but it was too late. My knife was already buried deep in his throat at that point. My body was coated in sprays of goblin blood, but I didn't slow down. As the other two started to turn toward me, I had already moved my blade to the next throat. The old kitchen knife broke upon hitting a second time, though I instantly used my other hand to push the broken edge deeper into the goblin's flesh.

After slaying two of the three goblins, I moved towards the final one. It still hadn't understood the situation. It just stared at its fallen comrades for a second

before letting out a roar as it finally grasped what was happening. I stood face-to-face with the furious survivor. My knife was broken and my hand hurt. It reached down for something on the ground, probably a sword or another weapon. I rushed forward, hoping to intercept the goblin before it could pick up its weapon, and started to chant the words needed to cast “Impact.”

I didn’t intend to harm the goblin with the spell—frankly, that wasn’t possible. Instead, I aimed it at its eyes, hoping to blind it just long enough to take its sword. I continued the long chant while dodging reckless punches from the crazed goblin.

If only magic could be fired as easily as bullets from a gun...

And the name “Impact” made me think of some grand explosion from something like a grenade launcher, not a small puff of air.

A warm, familiar sensation began spreading through my body as I finished my chant. The feeling of the mana flowing through my body, ready to be fired off, filled me with adrenaline. I threw my fist out toward the goblin.

“Take this!”

A sphere of light shot out from my hand., Instead of blinding the goblin, though, it blew his head right off. “Impact” had only been capable of making a tree sway ever so slightly before, but the spell I just used looked just like the impact from a grenade launcher.

“Let’s think about this later. I need to find the herbs, fast.”

I was quite used to battles in my old life, but my scuffle had taken more out of me than I’d expected; I found myself panting heavily as I started searching for the herbs. I quickly found what I was looking for by glancing into the lake. Luckily, they were growing around the shallow waters close to shore, so I was able to simply reach in and grab them while I kept an eye on my surroundings.

I also washed the blood off before running back home. Sprinting as fast as I could, I suddenly found myself back at the house. I rushed inside and quickly checked Erina’s vitals. Although she was breathing pretty heavily and didn’t seem fully conscious, she was alive—that’s what mattered. The book said I’d need boiling water for the medicine, so I needed to start heating some up first.

As I rushed into the kitchen, I remembered that our stoves were broken. I quickly looked around for our fire stones, but found all of them broken on the ground. Erina was about to make tea when she collapsed, so she might have knocked them all over in the fall. Without them, my only option was to make fire manually. I grabbed a knife, cut some wood, and started rotating the tip of the knife quickly above it. I was hoping that this would make enough sparks to start a fire.

This method was no easy feat, but it was far from my first time doing it. I managed to get one going after a bit. I ground up and mixed in the herbs with the boiling water while also maintaining the flame below. The herbs started glowing faintly like the book said they should, so I thought it was working. I waited for the medicine to cool down enough for someone to drink without getting burnt, then hurried over to Erina with it.

“Erina, here. Medicine.”

She didn’t even seem to recognize me as she muttered some nonsense. I pushed the cup to her mouth, but she just kept muttering that she was sorry; she didn’t even try to drink.

“I’m terribly... terribly... sorry. I’m...”

I didn’t know what she was apologizing for, but she had absolutely nothing to apologize to me for. I hadn’t been able to repay her for raising me yet! I...

“Just drink! I won’t ever forgive you if you don’t drink, do you hear me?!”

The sound of my stern voice made Erina tremble for a second. She opened her eyes in confusion and finally seemed to notice my presence. She finally brought her lips to the cup and started drinking.

“Once you’ve finished it all, go to sleep.”

Tears began to stream down her face, but she complied. I double checked that the cup was empty and that she had fallen asleep. Only then did I finally realize that I had made it.

Now I just had to wait and see how it went. I sat down next to her bed, planning on watching her until she woke up, but my four-year-old body was at its limit. Suddenly, the world went black around me, and I passed out from

exhaustion.

The sensation of something soft against my body woke me up. There was only one person who would stroke my head in such a way—Erina.

Erina?!

I jumped up in my bed and looked around in a panic.

“Yes, I’m right here.”

Erina was standing above me with her loving smile, gently patting my head. Her hair was a mess and her clothes were disheveled, but she didn’t look pale anymore. Based on how bright it was out, I’d say it was around noon—she’d made it.

I took another look at her face and was finally able to calm down. She had beaten the disease. Now, all she needed to do was rest and regain her mana. She’d be fine. I tried to get up to make some food for her, but, for some reason, my foot wouldn’t budge. I must’ve slept on it or something.

I felt ashamed that I wasn’t already up and taking care of her. Before I could move, though, Erina had me locked in a bear hug.

“My memory is somewhat hazy, but I remember your voice, Sirius. I heard it all. You saved me. I don’t even know how to express my gratitude.”

I loved being hugged by her, but I felt bad. I hadn’t even changed since I’d returned from the lake, so I was covered in dirt and... goblin juice.

“Erina, let go. You’ll get dirty.”

“Don’t be silly. How could my beloved savior dirty me?!”

“No. I mean, I don’t want to get any blood on yo—wait, whoops.”

“Blood?! Are you hurt?! Where?!”

Erina released me in a panic and looked down at my blood-stained shirt. Once she realized how much blood there was, she started screaming.

“Relax, it’s not my blood.”

“Th-Then what on earth happened...?”

“Well...”

Sigh. Let’s just come clean. No more secrets.

“It’s from a goblin. They got in the way when I was getting your medicine, so I dealt with them.”

“You... dealt... with them?”

“Yes. I used a kitchen knife.”

Erina stared at me in disbelief. I stared back, dead serious. It took her a second, but she seemed to calm down.

“Honestly, Sirius, I don’t know what to make of you.”

“I think we both have some things we need to talk to each other about.”

“That is true.”

“But let’s relax for now. There’s no rush. Let’s talk after we’ve washed up.”

“Very... well. I feel a little embarrassed now.”

I washed up and decided to make some food; I was getting quite hungry. I grabbed some bread, eggs, milk, and sugar, and whipped up some French toast that I named "toast from another world." The bread was fairly stale—nothing like the normal bread you’d use for toast—but, hey, it was something. The taste would likely be decent enough. I also brewed a little tea after finishing the toast, then brought it all to Erina’s room. She was already in bed, waiting.

I wanted to just get everything off my chest at once, but I knew we had to eat first.

“I made some food. How’s your appetite?”

“It’s fine, but when on earth did you learn to cook?”

“I’ll tell you everything after we eat, I promise. This is called French toast. It’s soft and easy to chew.”

“French... toast? I’ve never heard of that before.”

I had planned on making some rice porridge instead, but we didn’t have any rice in the house. This was plan b. Erina’s face lit up the moment she bit into the

toast.

“It’s delicious. I can taste your love in it, Sirius.”

“Is that so? Well, eat up. You need to regain your strength.”

“I will, thank you. Having you care for me like this makes me so happy.”

Erina smiled from ear to ear as she ate. Seeing her radiant smile reminded me just how happy I was that I was able to save her. After finishing breakfast up and having some tea, I figured it was time to talk.

“Okay. Are you ready to talk, then?”

“Certainly. If you are too, I shall start by telling you about your mother.”

I knew my dad was a complete asshole, but I knew nothing about my mom. I didn’t have an urgent need to tell her about myself first, so I let her start.

“I’m sorry, could you go get me something from that drawer?”

Erina pointed over at the desk in the corner of her room. When I opened up the desk drawer, I found a painting of a woman.

“That was Milalia Eldland, Sirius. Your mother.”

She had long, black hair and gentle, beautiful eyes. Looking at her filled me with a strange sense of tranquility. I could just tell right away that she was my mother.

“She tragically passed away during childbirth.”

“Oh.”

“I’m... really sorry.”

Erina lowered her head, and tears streamed down her face. I wasn’t sure why, but I didn’t feel much after hearing the news. I had a feeling she was dead, so I guess I was prepared. Also, my previous life had been a living hell. It was hard to show sadness when you had been through so much pain, death, and killing.

“Lift up your head, Erina. You’ve done nothing wrong.”

“But I’ve kept something so important from you all this time!”

“You kept it from me to avoid hurting me, right? I wouldn’t be mad at you for

simply caring for me.”

“But... I...”

I felt a little bad asking this right away, but there was something I needed to know.

“Where is she buried?”

“She... doesn’t have a grave. The mistress requested her remains be destroyed...”

They spread her ashes across a hill with a beautiful view, apparently. She had probably done it to avoid leaving any proof of her death to me, so as to spare my feelings. I wonder what kind of person she had been.

“I see. Could you tell me about her?”

“About the mistress?”

“Yeah. What kind of person was she? What did she like? Anything. I’d love to learn about her.”

“Of course. I’ll tell you what I know. Milalia, or Arya, was incredibly kind, yet she remained naive.”

A smile crept across her face as Erina thought about Mom. She looked so beautiful and refined in the picture—naive was not what I’d expected to hear.

“Miss Arya was the only child of the wealthy Eldland family. She was so kind... She was the one who saved me. Sadly, her family lost a feud to an opposing house, and they were all stripped of their nobility.”

I see. Struggles for power are found in all worlds, huh. I continued to nod along with Erina’s story.

“As the Eldlands were at the brink of homelessness, a certain fool of a noble showed up at Miss Arya’s door with a proposal. He said that if she agreed to marry him, he would make sure her parents were taken care of. As they were moments away from living on the streets, you can imagine how little say she had in the matter.”

She was told to sell herself to save her family, huh?

What came after was truly horrible. The man did take care of her parents, as promised, but he instantly sent them far away. To make matters worse, he grew tired of Miss Arya after just one night with her. He didn't give her a title, or anything of the sort, and simply trapped her in here. Noel, Dii, and I were to be thrown out, since we were commoners, but Miss Arya was able to convince him to keep us here with her."

Erina balled her fist with rage in a way I'd never seen before; she looked quite scary.

"Once Miss Arya realized she was pregnant, that fool of a man started to send her a little money and told her to take care of his potential heir."

She must have really hated him, as she didn't even try to hide her contempt despite him being my father. All her hatred that had been brewing within since I was born was bubbling to the surface.

"He saw her as a mere tool. While he did 'save' her parents, they were gone, and we never saw them again. Oh, how I hate that man."

Had I known all this and come face to face with this man, I didn't know what I would have done to him. Probably noticing my anger, Erina quickly replaced her frown with a smile.

"But Miss Arya was different—he just kept patting her belly with a blissful smile. I cursed that man for the pain he had brought her, but she would just reply with a smile. 'So what if he is the father,' she'd say. 'That's not the child's fault. We will raise him with all the love and care in the world. I'm sure mother and father are out there somewhere safe, even if I can't go see them anymore. And I have you guys with me here. This child will have wonderful people around him as he grows up. That's all that matters.' I had no response to that. All that mattered to the mistress was our safety. She also said that you were our son, not just hers. She was such a wonderful person."

It sure sounded that way. I wish I could have met her.

"But as she entered her final month of pregnancy, she started to feel ill. She had been prone to fevers before. Sadly, her body didn't hold up against the strain of giving birth, and..."

She passed away after giving birth...

“Your name is Sirius... my beloved Sirius. Please live happily, and don’t let anything hold you back. That’s your mother’s wish. Erina, the rest is up to you. Promise me you’ll love him enough for the both of us.’ Those were Miss Arya’s final words. And as I lifted you up for the first time, I remembered what she had told me earlier—even if your father is filth, you did nothing wrong, and deserve all the love in the world. And so I swore that I would make raising and protecting you my life’s purpose. But now...”

“We only have six years left here.”

“To be honest, I snuck out of my room yesterday and listened in on your conversation.”

“B-But...”

Erina looked stunned. It wasn’t a surprise, considering how badly she wanted to hide the truth from me. I reached out and held her hands in mine, smiling gently.

“Don’t worry. Learning that he was my father made me angry, sure, but hearing just how hard you worked to protect me made me so happy. Thank you, Erina. It’s all thanks to you that I’ve made it this far.”

“Such praise is wasted on a woman like me. I... drugged you.”

“Oh, that. I actually didn’t drink any of it. I spat it out when you weren’t looking. So could you make me a new batch when you’re feeling better? No drugs this time, preferably.”

“S-Sirius... Sniff. ”

Erina burst into tears as she gently fell into my embrace. I held her tightly until she finally stopped crying, and we exchanged awkward laughter.

“Thank you. I’m fine now.”

“So have I managed to pay you back?”

“There’s nothing to pay back. I’m going to protect you as long as I live. That’s my life’s purpose.”

“I don’t think you have to go that far. You’ve already done more than enough.”

“It is a servant’s job to work for their master until the end. So, as your servant, I will stay by your side until the day I die.”

She looked adamant—she had clearly made up her mind already. The loving way she had raised me was certainly motherly; however, in the end, she was still my servant. I wouldn’t have held it against her if she had wanted to spend some time taking care of herself for once, but I wanted to respect her wishes. I said nothing.

“All right. Thank you for sticking with me.”

“I’ll be by your side until the end of days.”

I felt a bit awkward when she said it like that, but I decided to put those feelings aside. Now that her story was out of the way, it was my turn. I had thought about what to say already, but I still wasn’t sure if she would believe me. Erina seemed to pick up on my nervousness, because she tightened her grip on my hands and smiled.

“I know not what bothers you, but I will listen no matter what it is. I’ll always be by your side, Sirius.”

That was the push I needed, and I started talking.

“Hm. Dreams, you say?”

If I told her I was a 60year-old man from another world, she would surely think I was crazy. That’s why I figured it was best to start small.. If I made it all sound like “dreams,” it would definitely be easier to believe.

“In those dreams I’ve been another person entirely—living his life, learning from it. It’s literally been like I have a completely different life within my dreams.”

“A different man’s life?”

“That’s not all. I don’t just remember every detail of these dreams, but it’s like I grow with the person in them. That’s how I learned to read and write so quickly. It’s how I had the knowledge to make the medicine you needed last night—hopefully you remember that I made the medicine all on my own. Not only that,

but I used the man's combat experience to defeat three goblins on my own. I don't know why I keep seeing his life in my dreams, but there's no doubt that I'm learning and growing a lot from them. It was thanks to those dreams I was able to save you."

Well, how would she react to that? Would she call me a monster or a freak? Would she say I was crazy? I had various worst case scenarios prepared in my head. But, surprisingly, she just smiled and lowered her head. I had heard before that this was a pose used to show loyalty.

"You did not cry even once as a baby. You could read in a year and use magic shortly after. I knew you were special, but now I know the reason. So that's why you've grown so quickly."

"You really believe that without any proof?"

"I cannot think of any other way to explain your incredible growth. Besides, I'm your servant. I believe anything you tell me."

She really did trust me, huh? She truly seemed to have meant it when she said she'd always be by my side, probably even if I became a criminal.

"Thank you for believing in me, Erina."

"And thank you for telling me, Sirius."

I no longer needed to worry about my implausible growth during training.

"Would you mind if I asked about what we're going to do from now on?"

"Wait a little while until Dii and Noel return, please. Let's all talk together."

"That's true. I wouldn't want to leave them out."

"Exactly. They were saved by the mistress just as I was, and they loved her a great deal. I'm sure they will believe you too, Sirius."

"Okay, let's wait for them then. Heh, I wonder how Noel will react when she hears about this..."

"Oh, she'll be shocked, I'm sure. But I'm more interested in seeing Dii's face. I wonder if he'll show some emotion for once."

We both laughed and waited for our friends to return.

Everything was fine. We could even laugh about it. It was clear that she believed and trusted me.. I just had to focus on getting stronger to protect this happy life we had together. I continued to nurse Erina and did some housework while we waited. Seeing her master doing chores that she was meant to do made Erina practically vibrate with frustration, but she was a good patient and stayed in bed like I told her.

After I cleaned up the mess left over from the previous day's scuffle, I prepared some tea. Just then, the front door flew open, and a happy voice called out to us.

"We're baaack! Um, hello? Anyone here?"

"Did that man do something?!"

"What?! Sirius?! Erina?! Are you here?!"

Seconds later, loud footsteps thundered through the hallways as Noel frantically burst through the door to Erina's room.

"Erina, what's going on?!"

"Noel, relax. Start by telling Sirius you're back."

"R-Right! Sirius, we're home! Now, tell me what happened! Did that man do something?!"

"Phew. You really have much to learn about being a maid, Noel..."

Erina let out a sigh as Noel ignored half of what she'd said in a panic. When she'd finally calmed down, we all sat down with a cup of tea. I explained what had happened, starting with Erina's illness, then moving on to my dreams. Noel looked really sad when I talked about Erina's illness, then lit up with joy as I told her I'd defeated goblins on my own. When I got to the part about my dreams, and how I'm already basically an adult, her eyes widened as big as bowling balls, and she stared at me in awe. Her reactions were as amusing as always. Noel looked pretty shocked by the end, though she seemed to have calmed down a bit after taking another sip of tea.

"There was some stuff in there I find hard to believe, but I believe most of it. For instance, I never taught you how to make tea, yet this is better than what I make! Why, I'm kind of mad now!"

Her mood swings were always fun to watch. She was actually a pretty smart girl, but didn't really realize it herself. She was right—I had never learned to make tea from any of them. My old master loved tea, and practically forced me to make him some every day. I wonder how he'd react if he tasted some of the tea in this world. Anyway, the point was that my sudden tea-making skills were what seemed to convince Noel.

“I didn't teach you either.”

“Well, making tea is our job, after all. No servant would ask their master to make tea for them.”

“Riiight? Hm. It tastes good, but that kind of pisses me off... Don't you agree, Dii?”

“It's tasty. I don't mind. Sirius, can you teach me some day?”

“As your big sister, I refuse to learn anything from... from... ahhh! Teach me too please!”

My “big sister” sure stuck to her ideals.. Now that all of them knew about my secret, I was ready to talk about what came next. Before I could speak, however, Noel's stomach let out a monstrous roar that bellowed throughout the room. Her cheeks flushed as red as a tomato. We decided to have dinner before talking any further. Erina was still recovering, so putting the talk off until the morning was probably for the best

Looks like making food takes priority over installing the new mana ovens.”

“Leave the firemaking to me, baby!”

“Ah, one second. I think there's still coal left over from the fire I made earlier.”

“Wow, you found the fire stones, huh? Well, look at you!”

No. The fire stones broke, so I made fire myself.”

“Huh?!”

Was it really that shocking that I made a fire?

“Dii, did you install the new mana ovens, like, through telepathy or something?”

“Sirius, could you tell me how you made fire on your own?”

“I mean, the standard way I guess? I used friction to—”

“Friction?!”

The servants—Noel in particular—did not seem convinced, so I decided to show them how to make a fire manually. When I did, they stared at me in shock.

“You can make fire that easily?!”

“We don’t even need the mana ovens now!”

“That’s amazing!”

Really, was that so amazing? I didn’t really get this world’s common sense. Wait, hold on a second...

“You guys really didn’t know about that?”

“Indeed. I’ve never even heard of someone making fire that way.”

“Same here.”

“I know right?! That’s definitely not normal!”

Did that mean no one had accidentally discovered fire in this world?

“So, what kind of methods do you guys use to make fire?”

“Well, we mostly use mana ovens and magic.”

“Fire stones.”

“Then there’s monsters that breathe fire, and lava I guess? That’s about it.”

Looks like I was wrong when I had compared our worlds. The common sense here and the common sense in my old world were definitely not the same. I had made the mistake of thinking it was because of how similar things looked, but now I realized how wrong I was. Because they had magic here to make fire, there simply was no reason for people to look into other methods. That was most likely the reason why no one had discovered how to make it manually without magic.

This made me think about the “Impact” spell I’d used the day before. “Impact” was only supposed to have the power to gently shake an object, and nothing

more. But I was able to blow a goblin's head clean off with it. I'd been focusing intently on the image of a grenade launcher when I'd cast the spell.. That had made the mana within me react, and the image I had in my mind came to reality through the spell. In other words, it seemed like what really mattered when casting spells was the image in your mind, not the chant. All the magic I knew, I had learned from Noel. Since I was told "Impact" acts a certain way, I simply thought that was it. My mind wasn't freed up to add my own spin to the spell.

Now that I had discovered this, I would change my approach to using magic. If my theory was correct, I'd be able to imagine all kinds of firearms in order to combine them with my magic. But it was already late, so I decided to put my experimentation off until the next day.

"Oh, I just remembered! Sirius, I got you a present!"

Noel grabbed something and held it out in front of me. I smiled in response. The next day, I headed out to the garden after breakfast to train. Erina was still resting in bed, and Noel and Dii were swamped with housework. That worked out perfectly for me—I had a perfect chance to try out my new experiments without harming anyone. Before I started, I opened the present that Noel had given me: a book titled "Intermediate Level Magic."

In the first book, there had been little info about chants beyond the fact that they were used for spell casting. In this one, there was another section about "free casting." Free casting meant that you used only the spell's name and no chant to activate the spell. This was not easy and required a lot of practice. And yet, I had managed to fire off "Impact" the other day without the full chant.

I supposed that the hurdle of being able to cast spells without chants was purely mental. I got started, eager to try my theory out. I recalled the feeling I'd had just as I'd fired off the "Impact" spell on the goblin. I created an image in my head of holding a gun and really tried to bring it to life.

"There!"

As the same warmth as the other day started to spread through my body, I fired off a spell. It wasn't "Impact," it was one I'd created and named.

"Launcher!"

Just as I muttered the name of the spell, a sphere of light shot out from my hand and blasted my target into a million pieces. In fact, it dug out a big crater in the ground, knocking back a few trees in the blast radius. It really looked just like a real bomb crater. That had worked even better than expected. It looked like my theories were right.

Of course, the magic was still different than the real weapons I'd envisioned. Mainly, a grenade launcher's pellet was meant to explode on impact, causing an eruption of fire along with the shock wave. But, since my affinity was colorless, I didn't make any fire at all; it was as if the shock wave alone had fired from the projectile.

In the midst of the falling rubble and dust kicked up by the explosion, Erina's worried voice called out to me...

"Sirius?! Someone, please hurry! Come to the garden!"

Erina practically fell out of her bedroom window as she sprinted toward me as fast as she could. As I watched the usually composed Erina run frantically towards me, I was hit by a wave of guilt.

"Are you hurt?! What on earth just happened?!"

"Oh, uh, that was me. My magic. I tried out a new spell. Everything is fine."

"What?! That was magic?!"

Dii and Noel rushed into the garden soon after her, so I sat everyone down and explained what I did.

"You did this?!"

"Wow. That's intermediate level for sure, if not higher. What spell did you use?"

"Well, I used the image of 'Impact' and made my own spell. I'm still working on it, but it went better than expected!"

"You made a beginner level spell into an intermediate one?! How?!"

I left the petrified Noel by herself and asked Dii to carry Erina back to her bed. I was happy she cared that much for me, but I couldn't have her rushing out like that all the time, especially not while barefoot.

“Erina, I’m fine, I promise. Please go back and rest.”

“Very well. I’ll be watching from the window, so just don’t push yourself too hard.”

Dii helped Erina up on his back and carried her back inside. Meanwhile, Noel finally snapped out of her petrification.

“Hey, uh, did you really make your own spell? You didn’t just use an intermediate fire spell like ‘Flame Lance,’ right?”

“Of course not. You know I can’t even use beginner level fire spells. I’d love to show you, but that took a lot of my mana., And I don’t want to worry Erina too much, so...”

“Launcher” was even more powerful than expected, but it sucked out a lot of my mana in one go. Firing two off in a day would probably be my limit.

“Um... do you mind if I watch you train?”

“I don’t mind. But it’s not safe being that close, so make sure you get a few meters behind me.”

Noel sat down behind me as I prepared my second experiment. This time I pictured a pistol. Instead of a big, powerful weapon, I went with the more stable and easy to use pistol for this one. My sidearm was like an extension of my arm, and I remembered every little detail of it clearly. The most important parts it needed to work were the rifling in the barrel that made the bullet spin, and the bullet itself. I aimed for a nearby tree, formed my hand like a gun, and pointed my index finger at it.

I focused on the mana flowing through my body and pictured a bullet spinning through the barrel.

“Magnum!”

A high-pitched sound filled the vicinity, and in the next moment a hole the size of my thumb was left in the tree. I tried moving my hand around a bit, firing at different trees, and it turned out to be even easier to control than a normal gun. There was basically no recoil, and the noise wasn’t as bad. My mana had all but drained by that point, so I plopped down on the ground next to Noel. When

I did, though, she stood up in shock.

“Sirius, was that really an original spell?!”

“Yeah. I used the images from my dreams to combine a weapon from that world with magic.”

“There’s a real weapon like that?! I don’t even know how to react!”

“That’s what surprised you? All right, then you should take a look at this.”

I pointed to a certain page in the book she had gotten me. The headline read “Meditation,” and it had detailed information about the mana flow within people. Mana was restored by slowly absorbing and purifying it through the surrounding air. It said that by practicing a lot, someone could learn to do this on command. The only thing I didn’t get was what “absorbing surrounding mana” really entailed.

“It says to ‘catch’ the mana around you, but... how?”

“Hmm... this stuff is really hard to explain, since it’s basically all done by feeling. I can’t do it either...”

“You can’t, huh? I guess it’s intermediate for a reason.”

“My magic teacher told us to feel out our own mana from within, then try to reach out with invisible hands for similar mana surrounding us.”

I could feel a warm tingling whenever I used magic, which was probably my mana flow. So I should look for something similar in the air around me? I tried to close my eyes, calm my breathing, and feel the air around me. I was quite dry on mana from using so much magic, so there was plenty of room to fill up. As I continued to focus on my surroundings, I started to feel a strange, invisible force.

It felt as though a mist of mana was floating around me. It felt like I was both touching it and moving through it at the same time. This brought up another question, though—did the mana I was sensing match my own? It was crucial to find the right mana in order to actually absorb it. Instead of approaching this as an absorption of what was around me, maybe I should try to tune in to the right mana by focusing on my own mana flow first? I tried to picture my own flow reaching out from within me. Right as I felt like I was getting somewhere,

something grabbed my shoulder and shook me.

“Sirius? You sleeping? Are you okay? Hello?”

“I was so close. Damnit, Noel.”

“Uh, whoops...”

Seeing the irritation on my face made Noel tremble in fear. I wasn’t actually mad at her, though I did feel a little annoyed. I just wanted to spook her a bit more for fun. I put on the creepiest smile I could, and slowly walked towards her. Just then, I noticed something strange—I didn’t feel tired at all. The dullness that came with mana exhaustion was just... gone.

“I-I’m really sorry! Please don’t tell Erina on me!”

Erina had been watching us the whole time, so that wasn’t an option. I ignored Noel, who continued to apologize desperately, and aimed my finger toward a few other trees. I fired off a volley of “magnum” shots, noticing that I suddenly had enough mana to fire off several more. As it turns out, I had basically restored all my mana during my brief meditation.

“S-Sirius, please don’t hurt me! Don’t be mad!”

“I’m not mad, don’t worry. Hey, Noel, is mana meditation meant to restore your mana right away?”

“No, it just speeds up the process. You still need to purify the mana you absorb, so it still takes at least half a day to fully recover, even with meditation. But wait, you just used a bunch of mana like it was nothing...”

“Yeah. I feel like I totally recovered all my mana. I don’t know why, but I think I’m able to restore mine instantly using meditation.”

I guess it meant my mana was already pretty much the same as the one found in the air. People were supposed to need time to purify the mana they absorbed, but I just tuned in to the stuff around me in order to absorb and use it instantly. This meant that, as long as I had the time to meditate for a bit, I could use as much of it as I wanted without worrying about mana exhaustion. Noel looked over at me with a serious expression.

“Sirius, that’s truly an incredible gift. You might have just blown the stigma

around colorless mana affinity out the window. You can't tell anyone about that power, do you understand?"

"I do. If someone found out about this, who knows what they'd do to me. I'll make sure no one outside my family finds out."

"Good. You're such a smart kid. By the way—when you say family, does that include me?"

"Of course. You're my family, and so are Dii and Erina. Don't you feel the same way?"

"Sniff. I'm so happy! Please, call me big sis from now on! Please!"

"I think I'll pass on that one."

"Whyyy?!"

I tested my theory out once again, expending and regenerating my mana at will. Sure enough, it worked. That gave me all the mana I needed to test out spells with all my favorite weapons, but only about half of those ended up working. The weapons I couldn't quite picture clearly enough did not work, proving that a very clear image in your head was essential for developing magic. After I exhausted and replenished my mana over and over, I finally lay panting on the grass to rest. Noel came over with a drink and a towel and handed them over to me.

"Are you okay? I think you should call it a day soon, Sirius."

I wiped my sweat off with the towel and looked over to the house, where Erina was still watching me like a hawk from her window. She would probably get really worried if I kept going, so I decided to stop there.

"You're right. It's time to eat soon, so I'll finish up here today. Thanks for hanging out with me, Noel."

"Don't mention it! Watching you taught me that I'm still lacking. I need to work hard and get better too! Maybe I should go back to school and study."

"Study? You can study magic at school?"

"Of course. But getting in costs a lot of money. I'm from a poor village, so I knew going to one was impossible. Still, we had a retired teacher living in our

village who taught me the basics!”

Noel gazed into the distance, probably thinking about her past.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to pry.”

“Don’t worry, I just got a little nostalgic. I’m super happy living here. I’m so glad I got to meet you guys.”

For once, Noel smiled in the way a woman her age should; that took me by surprise. Noel had been caring for me since I was born, so naturally I wanted the best for her. Hearing that she was happy filled me with joy too.

“Besides, you’re a hundred years too early to be worrying about your big sis! You might have some weird knowledge from your dreams, but you’re still a kid!”

She was right, but I didn’t like having the clumsy girl lecturing me. If anything, I saw Noel more as a little sister than a big sister. As we started walking back to the house, Noel reached out and grabbed my hand. I didn’t resist and squeezed her hand in return. Maybe she had a few features fit for a big sister, after all.

“Hehe. By the way, what do you want to do when you grow up, Sirius?”

“When I grow up?”

“I’m really proud of you. You’re doing all these amazing things. So I started thinking about what you’d do when you grow up, you know?”

“Hmm... Well, what about you? Is there something you want?”

“Me? I guess... becoming a bride. Hey, don’t dodge the question! We’re talking about you here!”

Noel blushed, and I started thinking about how easily her wish could be fulfilled if she just confessed that to Dii. I knew they were crazy about each other, but both were too shy to admit to it.

“Sorry! Hmm, let’s see.”

“Hahaha, I guess it’s too early to be thinking about that. Forget I asked.”

What did I want to do when I grew up? I had been thinking a lot over the past four years about what I wanted to do in this new world. My previous life was a

bloodied one, but I felt like I was able to redeem myself by going out on my own terms.

I still wasn't sure what to do now, but Noel's mention of school reminded me of something—my old students.

Sadly, I could no longer remember their names, but I remembered training those kids. With no family and no romantic partners to speak of, my students had been like my family. I had taken them under my wing and, in all honesty, I'd felt like a parent to them. Not having been able to watch them grow any further was the only regret left from my old life. And, just like that, I realized what I wanted. And so, after we'd finished dinner, I suddenly blurted out, "I want to go to school."

Everyone turned to me with surprised stares, especially Noel.

"Is this because of me?! Because I asked about your future?!"

"It's not your fault. This is something I decided on my own."

"Calm down, Noel. Tell us, Sirius—why school?"

"Well, for starters, school is a great place to learn and grow. But, most importantly, I want to be a teacher."

In this world, death was always following closely behind people's heels. Because of the large amount of races and beliefs, there was conflict everywhere. Considering that, along with the monsters that freely roamed around, it was a dangerous world. Of course, this was just information I'd learned from books. That's why I wanted to travel the world—to see and learn things for myself, then teach students what I'd learned.

"The man in my dreams was an instructor. It seemed like a hard but rewarding job. I'd love to do the same one day. That's why I want to start by going to school."

"I see. Schools do prepare dorms for their students, so I'd feel better knowing you have a place to stay. But with your colorless affinity, I..."

That was the only problem. People with colorless affinities were called weak, useless. While I pictured myself being bullied and outcast, Noel looked over at

me with a serious expression.

“... I think you’ll be fine.”

“What do you mean? You are well aware of how painful it is to be discriminated against.”

Discriminated? Did she mean because Noel was a demi-human? She was all smiles and laughter now, but I was told she had a tough time growing up.

“I watched Sirius when he was experimenting with his magic earlier. He’s truly amazing! Much better than me. I’d never be able to do that!”

That part was true. No one would be able to do what I was doing, as no one had any knowledge of firearms in this world.

“He’s already able to handle intermediate magic at this age! Picture where he’ll be in six more years! He’ll be able to give any bully a taste of their own medicine for sure! I’m sure he’ll become a great man in the future. I’m not worried for him in the slightest.”

Erina nodded and rubbed Noel’s shoulder in approval.

“That’s true. And, as his servants, it’s our job to do what he says. Besides, this is the first time I’ve heard Sirius say he wants something, so I want to do whatever is in my power to fulfill his wish.”

“Exactly! Let’s all work hard and help him!”

“Yeah!”

The three of them cheered, swearing to help me reach my goal.

“Thanks guys. But we still have six years, so there’s no rush.”

“That’s true. The first problem will be saving up for the school’s entrance fee. I’ll create my best magic medicine so we can sell it..”

“I’ll handle going to the market.”

“I’ll look for good schools! I can’t let Sirius’ genius be wasted rotting away here anyways!”

Noel raised her arms in excitement, though a part of me felt bad. It was like she was trying hard to look excited to bury her own emotions. She was probably

feeling a bit sad, not having been able to go to school herself.

“Looks like we’ll be busy from now on. Oh, Dii, give the thing we discussed to Sirius.”

“Okay.”

Dii left the room and returned shortly after with a sword. He handed it to me and looked like he wanted me to draw the blade out, so I did.

“What’s this?”

“The first sword I used when I was an adventurer. It can kill goblins easily.”

The blade was just about half a meter in length, and quite thin. The steel had no engravings or marks on it; it was a standard, simple design. It was a little too big for my young body to handle, but I was happy to have it. The blade looked sharp, but it was really light to wield. The quality of it was clearly very good.

“Are you sure I can have something this fancy?”

“It’s my spare. I found it in a chest one time. It’s too hard for me to use ’cause it’s too light. Figured it’d be perfect for you.

I had never heard Dii talk that much before in my life. It did seem perfect for self-defense, so I happily accepted it despite not knowing what it was made out of.

“Here’s a belt to hang it. It’s been fit for your size.”

“Thank you. I’ll treasure these.”

When I thanked him, I noticed Dii’s mouth curve up slightly in a smile. After I put on the belt and attached the sword to it, Erina grabbed my hand and looked into my eyes with a serious expression.

“Sirius. Just because you have a weapon, doesn’t mean you should put yourself in danger. Do you understand?”

“I know. I learned my lesson yesterday. But one day I’ll definitely fight some more goblins.”

“I’d prefer if you avoided as much fighting as possible, but... I suppose it’s needed for you to learn. But please, at least make sure you bring Dii with you.”

Erina looked like she wanted to tell me no, but kept herself in check as my loyal servant. I could easily blow a goblin to bits with my magic now, but I'd like to work on my physical fighting capabilities too. In my old world, defeating a goblin like that would have been as easy as swatting a fly. I was happy with my magic training going so well, but I didn't want to rely too heavily on it. I wouldn't like to attract any unwanted attention by showing my magic off, so it'd be best to avoid using it when possible. Thankfully, I didn't have to pretend to fit my own age anymore, so I could train freely around my beloved servants.

I had to work hard to regain the strength and stamina I had in my previous life. Between that and my rigorous magic studies, my real training had just begun.

Chapter 2: Meeting

Three years had passed since I first explained the situation to my servants and started my real training. Erina continued to watch over me as usual, Noel and I studied magic together, and Dii taught me the ins and outs of being an adventurer. Before I knew it, I had turned seven. Between my tough training routine and busy days developing new spells, I grew at an incredible rate. I felt like it was time to start practicing real combat, so Dii and I had started sparring together.

Dii had clearly learned a lot from being an adventurer, so he was a worthy opponent. Still, he was self-taught, and I had a lot more experience. I ended up teaching him more than the other way around. He had an excellent sense for combat, so I had considered making him my first student. Unfortunately, he had declined, saying he wanted to be a chef; so I gave up on that. I loved to see people chase after their dreams, and I'd never want to get in the way of Dii's. He was like family, after all. I did teach him some recipes from my old world, though, which made him really happy. I had never seen him smile that much before—it was quite the sight.

My preparation for school was going well. We were able to save up for the entrance fee by collecting rare herbs and crafting medicine out of them. Dii would take these to the town to sell. The three years I had left should prove to be plenty. After some training with Dii, he determined I was ready to be a full-fledged adventurer. That was his way of saying I could go out on my own without him worrying now.

That meant I could start using nature to my advantage when training, and I had begun to climb hills and such. I set my sights for the sky itself. During this time, I'd learned two new spells. The first one was "Boost." It was possible to enhance your physical abilities by spreading mana through your body, and this was a spell specifically for that. Although it wouldn't give you superhuman

strength, it would allow you to crush a boulder with your bare hands—and that was just one example. The spell would also reinforce your body, as if equipped by an invisible shield. As long as you concentrated and did it right, you wouldn't get hurt from such feats.

It was a very difficult spell to use, however, since it caused mana exhaustion very quickly. It was a colorless spell, which was one of the reasons it spent so much mana. After analyzing the spell for a while, I found that all it did was spread your mana through your body. Thanks to my knowledge of the human body and nervous system, I knew just how and where to send the mana, which allowed me to make the spell a lot more powerful.

The result was that I could boost my physical abilities for several hours at a time to superhuman levels. I could run to the lake in the nearby forest in just a few minutes, and make a goblin practically explode with a single punch. I felt like I was no longer human.

The next spell was my own creation: “Air Step.” By concentrating on my mana, I was able to give it mass. I could then transfer the dense mana to my feet and create invisible platforms in the air for me to step on. In theory, this was already enough to let me run through the air by myself, but even a single use drained me too much to make it actually useful. In addition, the platforms would vanish after just a few seconds, so I couldn't just stand in the air forever. But, because of my ability to regenerate mana at will, and the way I could use “Boost” to power myself up, a second or two was all I needed. I had thought about using “Impact” to literally send myself flying, but it was very hard to control. Plus, the explosion would hurt a lot, so I gave up on that.

At any rate—thanks to those two spells, I was able to “fly” for as long as my mana lasted. I spent my days practicing my “air running” by going up the mountain. I would gaze out over the ocean at the landmass in the distance, which sparked my interest. According to my servants, it was a continent called Adload. We actually lived at the very edge of our continent, Merifest, which meant a quick trek up the mountains was enough to reach the ocean and see Adload.

While there were some differences, the two continents were pretty similar

overall. Apparently, it took about a day to sail from the nearby port over to Adload. I thought it looked close enough to reach within a few hours, though. I was told that it took longer because the sea close to Adload was riddled with dark magic, which frequently sank ships that tried to cross it. Even if a ship were to get through the harsh waters, the area was surrounded by cliffs, which would make docking the ship outside designated ports nearly impossible.

And so, I was told that the specific trade routes would be my only options. Of course, I wasn't thinking about sailing at all, but flying. That's why I leapt through the air and headed toward the distant land mass. I had prepared myself to be attacked by potential monsters or something on the way, but found myself reaching the shore safely. I was first greeted by large forests, which seemed completely devoid of human life. In fact, even after I'd traveled through the air for quite some time, I found no signs of human life anywhere. It was most likely uninhabited.

After traveling through the air for a bit longer, I noticed a strange presence nearby. It was hard to describe, but I felt a strange tingling beckoning me. I turned toward it and used the "Search" spell in that direction. The spell was basically just like a sonar. It fired off mana much like sonars fired off sound, then waited for the mana to be reflected. It would then map out the area, showing the magic readings of anyone that happened to be around. An interesting feature of my affinity was that it made me hard to notice, since it had the same quality as the general mana in the air. Noel would have to concentrate really hard to notice me, even when she was up close.

Anyway, I wound up with a whole bunch of readings from animals and monsters nearby. But I also noticed one small, human-like reading. I didn't know what it was, but I decided to head toward it. I was about to meet someone other than my servants for the first time. Just in case, I figured I should stay hidden for a while first to see who I was dealing with.

I was still in the body of a seven-year-old boy, so things could get tricky if I ran into the wrong type of people. Staying hidden was key to make sure I didn't get in any trouble. I followed the "Search" spell, hiding in an area close to the source of the readings. Even if it did end up in a fight, if I only had one or two opponents I could quickly escape into the air again. I made sure to not make a

sound as I slowly started sneaking toward the target. It reminded me of the many times I had snuck into enemy bases in the past. I had always been able to sneak past the guards, taking them out unnoticed. Instincts kicked in; and before I knew it, I had snuck all the way to them without alerting anyone.

I looked up and spotted what had to be an elf. While they looked mostly human, elves had much longer lifespans than us, and were easily recognizable by their distinct pointed ears. They were said to be a proud race, and were known among humans to be absolutely breathtaking. This elf was a woman with green hair reaching down to her waist, and equally beautiful verdant eyes. She had the body of a model, and was truly a beauty any guy would be drawn to like a moth to a flame. But what really caught my eyes was her condition—she was breathing heavily, sweating, and leaning up against a tree. Her clothes were torn in several places, revealing her skin. She wore a simple leather top which exposed her belly, and a green skirt which also looked easy to move in. The outfit seemed too light to me, but I couldn't deny that she looked great in it. I continued to watch her, and she eventually started moving forward while pulling off her torn-up mantle. When she did, she exposed a deep cut along her right arm.

She was bleeding heavily, but made no attempts at stopping the bleeding. Instead, she looked forward and shouted.

“I know you're over there! Come out!”

She wasn't looking at me, but toward five different mana reactions approaching us. As soon as I noticed them, something shiny flew toward her at great speed. It took me a second to realize that it was a knife. I was about to jump out, but the elf swiftly drew her own blade and knocked it out of the air. She looked rather capable herself. When the knife she had deflected landed next to me, I finally realized what was up—the blade was coated in some kind of substance, probably poison.

Seeing the gash in her arm and the way she was sweating, it wasn't hard to put two and two together. Soon, five humans wielding poisoned daggers walked out of the thicket. Their arms were covered in cloth to ensure they didn't cut themselves with the poisoned blades. Based on their equipment, they looked like adventurers. They all smiled at the woman with the eyes of predators having

cornered their prey. One among them stepped forward, eyeing the woman from top to bottom.

“You’re still able to knock a knife out of the air after being poisoned? You’re one tough elf!”

“Haah, haah... that was nothing. I barely had to lift a finger.”

“Hah, you sure talk big. You’re clearly seconds away from collapsing, sweetheart.”

“Yeah, we can see you trembling! If you’re cold, you should come over here; we’ll warm you up! Hahaha!”

“Looks to me like she wants it! You’ve clearly been waiting for us over here, honey!”

They were a bunch of mindless thugs. The woman took one more look at the men to make sure they were all there.

“Say what you’d like. It’s true, I have been waiting for you. But you’ve got the reason all wrong...”

She closed her eyes, as if preparing to cast a spell. No, it looked different—she didn’t chant, and I didn’t feel her mana flow change like usual. Something felt off. Was she the source of the strange tingling I felt earlier?

“I gathered you up here so I could blow you all away at once! Oh great tempest, banish my foes to the sky!”

In the next moment, a small tornado appeared out of thin air next to the men. The tornado started spinning, but quickly died down and vanished before it could do anything. The woman tried to cast it again, though nothing happened.

“Kuh... my mana...”

“Sh-Sheesh... that scared the shit out of me. I’m amazed you managed to use any magic at all after being hit by that poison. It’s really nasty stuff. You’re one amazing chick!”

“Yeah, yeah, enough flirting! Let’s go get a taste of her, shall we?”

“Damn right! I’ll start.”

The men started walking toward her with vulgar smiles. As they drew closer, the woman grabbed her knife and brought it to her own throat.

“I’d rather end my own life than be defiled by filth like you. Don’t get any closer, or I’ll kill myself.”

“Fine by me. But weren’t you blabbing about your family earlier? You sure you want to do that?”

“I...”

The woman hesitated for a second, which gave the man enough time to draw six knives and hurl them at her. Although he was undoubtedly a pile of human garbage, he did seem to be fairly skilled. I could tell as much by the speed that he drew the knives and the way he threw them.

The woman still managed to knock two of them out of the air and avoided most of them with incredible speed. Sadly, one did scrape her skin, leaving a gash in her stomach. She was probably moving on pure adrenaline at that point; and, as it ran out, she collapsed on the ground. The faster her heart beat, the faster the poison was being pumped through her body. She looked to be at her limit. The men simply watched their prey with revolting smiles.

“The effects had been slowed down before, but you’re really feeling it now, huh? That last one in the stomach really stung, I bet.”

“You... filthy cowards...”

“Boss! You’re going to kill her.”

“She’s a tough one. She won’t die from this. That’s why these chicks are so expensive!”

“Well, in that case, we’ll have to take our time and enjoy her!”

“There you go! Hey, elf—stay still, y’hear? I’ll make you feel real good in no time!”

“You might feel so good you go straight to heaven, hahaha!”

“Sorry to disappoint, guys. There’s no heaven, I’ve checked.”

“Huh?! Arrgh?!”

I called out to the thugs, then chucked a dagger dead centre in the leader's arm. Before they could react, I jumped out between them and the woman.

“Boss?! Hey, how dare you... huh?!”

“What the hell? It's a freaking kid. Where'd you come from, brat?”

They all looked at me like I was crazy. These men clearly underestimated me—which wasn't surprising, considering I was in a child's body. That was a great advantage to have at the start of a fight. I didn't want them to aim at her instead of me, so I started taunting them.

“What do you mean? I came from over there. Are you dumb? Oh, I was the one who threw that knife, by the way. You dropped it, so I wanted to give it back. Aren't I nice?”

“Tch, what an annoying brat. Guys, fuck him up!”

“No! Run away, child! Hurry!”

They were way too easy to manipulate. A few simple words and they charged toward me like feral pitbulls. The woman cried out in desperation, gazing at me with genuine worry. She definitely didn't seem like a bad person at all. It was pretty clear from the start who the bad guys were, but now I was even more motivated.

“Dad, over here!”

I started with mental warfare. I looked past them, waved my arm, and called out to my “dad.” Normally, a child like me would never be walking around in the woods alone. I'd have a parent or guardian with me for sure. So when I called out to the imaginary guardian behind them, they all naturally turned around. This left them completely exposed from the front.

I cast “Boost” while they were distracted, and, before they could even react, they all had a knife stuck in their foot. These were all the knives the leader had thrown earlier, which I had picked up after him.

“Morons. What are you doing turning your backs on your enemy?”

“Y-You fucking shithead!”

“That's all you got? You think that will scare me? Oh, by the way—these are all

your knives.”

“Huh?! B-Boss! D-Did you bring the antidote?!”

“Shut up. Of course I did. I’ll have some, then you can... huh?!”

The leader reached out for a pouch, only to find it missing. By using “String,” I had easily pulled it from his grip without him even noticing. I had long since made a modified version of “String,” too. I would imagine a powerful wire instead of the thin string the spell would originally create. While the men tried to make sense of the situation, I checked the pouch. There were two small flasks inside: one was clearly filled with poison, which meant the other was probably the antidote. What’s more, the flask was so small that it obviously wouldn’t have been enough for more than one person.

“Is this the antidote?”

“Listen up, you little shit! If you give me that right now, I’ll let you live, okay?! Hand it over!”

“I see. You only have one then. Quite the leader, am I right guys?”

“Huh?! B-Boss, is he serious?!”

“Of course not! Don’t listen to him!”

“As long as you have this, you could just pour some poison in your drinking supply, get rid of everyone else, and take the spoils of war for yourself. That would be my guess at your plan, anyways.”

“Boss, you didn’t plan that, did you?!”

“I told you to shut up and listen! That little shit is just playing with you!”

“Well, take out the other vials of antidote then! Why wait for him to hand that one over?!”

I had just asked him if that was the antidote, nothing more. He basically did my job for me with his reply. It was a great way to get the pent up frustration out of my system. I left the poisoned and panicked men by themselves and turned to the woman.

“Are you okay?”

“I-I’m fine. But how did you...?”

“We can talk about that later. Can I see your wounds?”

The woman looked confused about what just happened. She already seemed to be paralyzed by the poison, so I had to hurry. The cut on her stomach was shallow, so it didn’t need any immediate care. The one on her arm was much deeper and definitely needed to be handled quickly.

“Guys, just shut up! Look at what the kid’s doing!”

“Shit! Just... let’s kill him first, then handle this, okay?!”

“You guys sure are slow.”

I put the stolen pouch in my backpack. The wounded elf reached out for me and placed a trembling hand on my cheek.

“I’m fine, thank you. It’s too dangerous for you out here. Please run away quickly.”

“Got it. I’ll run real soon.”

“Good boy.”

Her gentle smile was so beautiful that it would surely make any guy’s heart skip a beat. Since I was still in a child’s body, though, it didn’t affect me much. I intended to keep my promise, of course; I gently wrapped my arms around her and lifted her up.

“Well then, let’s go!”

“Huh?! What?!”

Obviously, a normal child my age wouldn’t have been able to carry a grown-up like that. But with the power “Boost” had provided me, it was a whole different story. I held her tightly and started to run.

“Wait! Stop! You’re going to get caught if you’re carrying me! Let me go and run!”

“It’s fine. You’re so light, this is no problem!”

I had been training since I was a baby, quite literally, so even carrying her normally wouldn’t have been that difficult. “Boost” only made the process easier

—it made her feel as light as a feather. I had to admit that I enjoyed the soft touch of her body against mine as I ran. As you'd expect, the men started to chase after us.

“Wait up, stupid kid!”

“It's just a damn punk! Get him before the poison really kicks in and finish him off!”

I was powered up by “Boost,” but the guys were also incredibly slow. If I just pushed myself a little, I'd be able to lose them in no time. I purposely stayed close enough to them that they could still see me. The reason was simple: I wanted to finish them off for good. The world didn't need horrible trash like them. I could shoot them all with “Magnum” easily enough, but I didn't want to show that to the woman. It would be hard to explain my skill to her, so I decided not to finish them off myself. After they chased me for a while, the men started to grow wobbly from the poison. I stopped and used “Search” to map out the area, letting them catch up.

“Haah, haah... We finally tired him out...”

“Haah... W-We won't last much longer, either, so let's just get this over with.”

“What do you mean, ‘tired me out?’ You guys are clearly the ones who're tired.”

What a hopeless bunch. They were clearly desperate—most likely because of the poison—but they still managed to keep an eye out on their surroundings. I wanted to comment on how easy it had been to trick them, but there wasn't much point in telling the enemy they had been beaten.

“You were running around and waiting for the poison to spread through our bodies, right kid?”

“You're not totally wrong, but that's not the only reason. Anyways, I'll be leaving now. Bye.”

“Leaving?”

“Here they come.”

I used “Air Step” and jumped into the air just as a group of monsters jumped out from the depths of the forest. Creatures similar to bears came storming out

from the cover of the trees. They were twice my height, with sizable snouts. In addition, they had an extra pair of arms compared to regular bears. I had noticed them nearby by using “Search,” and purposely led the men over to them.

“Fuck! It’s a gigu bear!”

“There’s one here too!”

“Shit, I can’t move...”

The bear-like monsters seemed to hunt in packs, and the poisoned men were surrounded in no time. I could hear their screams from below, but I ignored them as I jumped through the sky. I didn’t feel sorry for them at all. Any scum who’d try to poison and assault a defenseless and innocent woman like that deserved nothing less. I started searching for a lake or another body of water as I held the woman tight. For some reason, I felt like cleaning the blood and dirt off her. I wanted her to look pretty and neat again. Her wounds needed to be treated right away, and it just felt like a shame to leave even a scratch on such a beautiful body. Surprisingly, she stayed completely still in my arms the whole time. Wouldn’t it have been normal to ask questions if you were saved by a child who randomly started flying?

“Hey... we’re flying, right?”

“That’s right. If you’re scared, I can go back to the ground.”

“No, not at all! I love it! I had no idea flying would feel this good!”

She seemed like quite the fighter. Despite what she had been through, she looked like she was genuinely enjoying the feeling of flying, not giving the incident any thought at all.

“Hehe, it’s okay. This child isn’t an enemy, I can tell.”

She suddenly turned to face the air beside us and started to talk. It was as if there was something invisible right there beside her. But almost instantly, she seemed to snap out of it and blushed in embarrassment.

“I’m sorry, I got a little carried away. So, where are we going?”

“I’m looking for a river or something to clean up.”

“A river? In that case, there’s one over there.”

Sure enough, by following her directions I soon spotted a river running through the dense forest. I used “Search” to make sure there weren’t any threats nearby, then landed and sat the woman down on a nearby boulder. It was a very open area, but that only made it easier to spot any potential enemies on the off chance something showed up. I started by taking out the antidote.

“Here, can you drink this?”

“It’s a little embarrassing, but... I don’t think so. Could you help me?”

The woman opened her mouth, waiting for me to feed it to her. I had helped Erina drink her medicine in the past, but this felt different for some reason. She looked so beautiful that it felt like I was doing something I shouldn’t. Because of my age, I didn’t feel aroused, but had it not been for that I absolutely would have.

“Hnng... my body is warming up.”

“That’s good. It means your senses are going back to normal. I’ll finish treating you before the paralysis wears off.”

I checked her wounds. The bleeding had stopped, but they were still open. I took a clean rag, dipped it in the river, and cleaned the dried blood around the wound. Normally, that would have hurt, but the poison was probably numbing the pain.

“Phew. It’s so deep that it’ll leave a scar, won’t it?”

“It’s okay. I have to put my hand on it for a little while, so it could hurt. Try to endure it.”

“Oh my, you can use healing magic at your age?”

“Umm, not quite. But it will heal the wound, in a way.”

Healing spells were primarily in the water affinity. Most of them would create water rich with mana that would be capable of closing wounds and healing various illnesses. Since I was colorless, I was barely able to heal even a tiny scratch with water magic, so I had just given up on that. Instead, I had come up with a different way of healing. It was simple, actually—I’d place my hand on the wound, funnel my mana into it, and spread it through her body. While I treated

her wounds, she awkwardly looked down at me.

“Umm... I was about to ask your name, but I just realized I haven’t even said thank you yet.”

“That’s true. Don’t worry about it. I just did what I felt was right, that’s all.”

“Of course I have to thank you! You saved my life! But, before that, what is your name?”

“Sirius. But isn’t it normal to say your own name before asking someone for theirs?”

“I’m sorry, this is an old elf custom. My name is Shemifia Alamis. Thank you so much. You saved my life, Sirius.”

Shemifia flashed a radiant smile. I didn’t save her to get anything back, of course, but being thanked by such a beautiful woman sure did feel good.

“You’re welcome. I’m glad I was able to get you out of there safely, Shemifia.”

“Oh, you can call me Fia. So, Sirius... just who are you?”

What a curious little elf. She didn’t seem to have any bad intentions, at least, so I didn’t mind.

“What do you mean? Can’t you tell by looking?”

“You look like a human child, but... you defeated a group of adults like it was nothing, and you use these strange spells I’ve never seen before. I traveled a lot in my day, but I’ve never met anyone like you.”

She talked as if I was a different race from humans entirely. While I did have some strange circumstances going on, I was technically still just a human child. I had simply trained a lot and developed the magic on my own. Other than what the knowledge from my previous life allowed me to do, I was just like any other child.

“I’m just a normal human. A seven-year-old human child.”

“I don’t know about that. You look like one, but I feel like I’m talking to an adult.”

“I like reading. I suppose I’ve learned a lot from the books.”

“I feel like that definitely doesn’t explain all of this, but... very well. Let’s leave it at that. Now, why did you save me, Sirius?”

Fia looked at me with a serious expression.

“You didn’t seem fazed at all when those men died. I’m not saying I have a problem with that, of course. But you’re clearly a very smart boy. Why did you save me?”

“Do I need a reason to save someone in trouble?”

“I mean, a smart boy like you surely knows just how much an elf like me is worth... you could still tie me up and sell me if you wanted to, so... why did you go to such lengths just to save my life?”

True. Elves very rarely came out of their forests. Considering how beautiful they were, it was no surprise that slave traders were desperate to get their hands on elf women—that was definitely what those horrible men had planned. It also explained Fia’s confusion, since she probably expected me to kidnap and sell her instead. I had a few reasons: the first one was quite shallow—I didn’t want such a beautiful woman to be defiled by those gross men. The second one...

“Well, I thought it would be an honor to befriend such a pretty and nice elf.”

The only friends I’d made so far were Erina and the other servants, so I desperately wanted to get to know some more people—especially an elf. Fia stared at me for a second, then burst out laughing.

“Hahaha! That’s all? Wait, so if I wasn’t pretty, you wouldn’t have saved me, hmm?”

“Of course I would have, but I’m still a man! Well, a boy. Obviously saving such a beautiful woman would make any man proud.”

“Hehe. You’re a very blunt person, huh? Well, it feels strange saying so myself, but I’m glad I’m pretty. It helped me meet you, after all.”

“Does that mean...?”

“Yes. Let’s be friends, Sirius. No, rather, please be my friend.”

Because of the lingering paralysis, it took her a while, but Fia forced herself up and reached out for a handshake. And so, for the first time since I had been

reborn, I made a friend other than my servants.

“The numbness is finally starting to go away. Hey, you said you were healing my wounds, right? I haven’t seen you do anything but place your hands on them.”

“Oh, right. It should be done now.”

I removed my hand from the wound; sure enough, the cut had completely healed up. Fia looked at her arm in awe and ran her fingers across where the wound had been.

“Amazing. There’s no sign it was even there in the first place! I’ve never seen such a powerful healing spell before!”

“Actually, it wasn’t a spell. I just boosted your body’s recovery process with my mana.”

All I did was transfer my mana into her body, driving the cells around the wound crazy, which caused the normal healing process in her body to be sped up by an incredible amount. I came up with it to heal my own wounds, but it works for other people too. I called it “Rapid Regeneration.”

“It’s not a spell? But it’s so amazing. Does that mean I can use it too?”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t think anyone but me can use it.”

It took an incredible amount of mana control to do it, and one wrong turn would destroy the cells, rather than powering them up. It wasn’t as simple as just pouring mana into someone and hoping for the best. It was a very delicate process that, without a proper understanding of human anatomy, did more harm than good.

“Then the flying one. Can you teach me that? That was wind magic, right?”

Fia’s eyes sparkled with excitement. That was definitely more interesting to her than the healing. I didn’t mind teaching her the spell, but she had clearly misunderstood.

“You’re talking about ‘Air Step,’ I’m sure. Well, for starters, that isn’t wind magic.”

“What? But you were literally flying in the air. That has to use the wind,

doesn't it?"

"No. What I did was create physical blocks of mana that I stood on. My affinity is colorless, so I can't really use wind magic."

"What...? You're colorless? You're kidding, right?"

It seemed like the colorless affinity carried a stigma regardless of race. I wasn't carrying a mana tool that could prove it, sadly.

"Is it really that surprising?"

"Well, I just can't fathom someone who can do all this amazing stuff being colorless... but now that you mention it, I didn't feel changes in the wind when you used that spell."

"You can feel the wind that clearly? Is that because you're talking with spirits?"

"How did you know?"

She had been honest with me so far, so I saw no reason to not be honest with her.

"When you fired that spell off at the men earlier, I could tell that it was way too powerful compared to the mana you were using. And when you cast it, I felt this strange presence around us."

I was using "Search" to sense all the mana usage around me at the time, so I could tell how little she was using. Regardless, the spell was clearly incredibly powerful—had it not been for the poison stopping her, it would have torn the men apart for sure. Also, after touching her directly and feeling her mana, I was able to confirm that the strange sensation I felt before didn't come directly from her. So logically, I concluded that she had gotten help from a spirit to cast such a powerful spell. Fia stared at me for a second, like she was deciding whether or not to tell the truth, then let out a sigh.

"Phew... can you see spirits too, Sirius?"

"No, I can't. I think I can sense them, though. But this is the first time it's ever happened, so I don't know if it was just a coincidence or not."

"Is this your first time seeing spirit magic?"

“Yeah. It wound up misfiring, but that was really amazing. I could tell how powerful it was.”

Had she finished the spell, I’m sure it would have turned into a genuine tornado.

“I know, right! That’s why there are some people out there trying to hunt down and force spirits to help them. That’s why I’ve been trying to hide the fact that I see them.”

It definitely seemed like a mighty powerful weapon, so it made sense that people wanted it. Fia was already an expensive target as an elf, but one who could use spirit magic? That would surely bring a pretty penny.

“Spirit magic works by simply handing a small amount of mana over to the spirit, which they use to cast the spell. But you need to be careful, as the spirits will go haywire and make the spells too powerful if you don’t control your emotions. It’s rather difficult to use.”

Having such a delicate yet monstrous power must have been difficult for her. Fia was smiling, though I could tell that there was genuine worry behind that smile. All people who knew they had the power to destroy had smiles like that.

“Well, this is my problem. Nothing you have to worry about, Sirius.”

“I don’t know much about spirits, but I know how difficult it is to hide your powers.”

It was definitely similar to my struggles. Since I was in a similar position to her, I knew how good it felt to not carry the burden alone, and I believed she deserved the same. Fia tilted her head in confusion. As I was about to show off a spell to her, I sensed something big quickly approaching.

“Something’s coming!”

“Huh? Ah, you’re right! The spirits are going crazy! What is that?!”

Fia pointed toward the sky, where something huge was moving this way. It looked like a gigantic lizard with wings—probably some kind of relative to dragons.

“Looks like a wyvern. I just see one, though. Maybe it got separated from its

pack.”

“Stop analyzing and start running! That thing is dangerous! Let’s hide!”

“It’s too late for that. It’s coming toward us.”

The wyvern let out a high-pitched shriek, then started diving directly at us. It was three times my size, which was considered small by wyvern standards.

“Looks like a youngling. Still, it’s pretty darn big, isn’t it?!”

“Come on, let’s hide! Ahh, we don’t have time... okay, stay back, I’ll—”

Fia tried to calm down and use a spell, but the lingering effects of the poison were clearly making it difficult. I gently placed a hand on her shoulder to calm her down and took a step forward.

“Sirius, get down! You can’t fight that thing! Leave this to me, I’ll at least stall it!”

“It’s okay, I got this.”

The wyvern had gotten extremely close already. It was nose diving straight toward us.

“Look closely, Fia. Spirit magic isn’t the only type of magic that’s dangerously powerful.”

“Huh? What are you—”

“Magnum!”

I fired the invisible gunshot with incredible precision, since I’d trained the spell for years already. I combined the spell with “Impact,” which made the bullet explode on impact. As the “Magnum” bullet hit the wyvern’s eye, the entire head was blown to bits. Its lifeless body crashed into the ground before us, leaving Fia staring at the spectacle in awe.

“What... what just happened?”

“It’s one of my original spells. As you can see, it’s pretty powerful.”

“Yeah, I don’t even know what to say... you didn’t even chant, yet you cast something so powerful on your own...”

“See? So I’d prefer if you didn’t tell anyone about what you just saw.”

“I-I wasn’t planning on it! B-But why, if I may ask? With powers like yours, you’d probably get all sorts of jobs from the nobles. Heck, you’d probably get them from the royal family. Oh...”

“See? There’s lots of people out there who’d want to use a power like that for their own gain, just like yours.”

Fia wasn’t the only one who was trying to hide her powers from the greedy masses.

“I see. So we’re the same.”

Yes, we had very similar problems. Fia smiled faintly but sincerely. I left her to relax and recover, while I went over to the dead wyvern to inspect it. The head had been blown clean off, so other monsters would likely come over to eat the bloody remains if left like that. I started to quickly gather the parts of the wyvern that would be valuable. As I worked, Fia came over and took another look at the dead beast.

“I still can’t believe it. You defeated a wyvern with nothing but your finger...”

“It wouldn’t have blown up like that if I’d hit the wrong spot. I aimed for the soft eyes specifically because of its hard scales.”

“Being able to aim so accurately with any spell is impressive in its own right. So, what are you doing?”

The wyvern might have been small for its species, but it was still a cousin of the mighty dragons. The scales were too hard for a mere knife to pierce, which made the resource gathering very hard.

“I want the wing membrane to sell later, but my knife can’t cut it. These scales sure are tough.”

“Yeah, that knife won’t be enough. Here, try this.”

Fia handed me a green knife that glittered mysteriously. I had seen a lot of knives with custom designs in my day, but this was the most beautiful blade I’d ever seen—it was like a work of art. I almost felt bad using it, but she clearly wanted me to. Plus, I couldn’t say no to that smile.

“Wow, this is amazing.”

“It’s made out of mithril. It’s light, sharp, and conducts mana easily.”

The scaly wings of the wyvern, which had been too hard to cut through just a moment ago, felt like butter with this knife. I easily cut out the membrane I wanted.

“Thanks. That made things a lot easier.”

“No problem. Are you sure that’s all you want, though? The scales themselves would sell for quite a lot, I think.”

“I can barely fit these in my bag, so I’ll settle for that. If I carry too much weight, it’ll be hard to fly later.”

These parts seemed to be the most useful, so I was happy that I had taken them. Fia stared at me like I was crazy for leaving the expensive wyvern scales behind.

“You’re an interesting one. A typical adventurer would be picking that thing clean to the bone for any part they could sell. Wyvern and dragon scales are incredibly valuable.”

I’m sure the scales would’ve indeed been profitable, but I wanted to avoid any suspicions being placed on Dii. He was the one who’d be selling them, after all, and our family had enough problems as it was. I decided to grab just a handful of scales so I’d have enough for some spare cash, but not enough that it could be deemed suspicious.

“I don’t have many places to sell this stuff, and don’t want to get in trouble. What about you? You don’t want any?”

“I was on my way home. There isn’t a place I can sell this stuff at, so I have no real use for them.”

“All right. Let’s leave the rest, then. How are you feeling?”

Fia started to move her arm around. She smiled and ruffled my hair with her hand. Having such a beauty pat my head felt pretty great.

“I still feel a little numb, but I can move just fine. Thank you so much.”

“Great. We should get moving soon. The wyvern corpse might start attracting other monsters. I’ll walk you home, Fia.”

“Are you sure? All right, thank you.”

Fia smiled gently, then turned toward me and held out her arms. It was obvious what she wanted. I had already planned on picking her up and flying her home, but her request made me smile.

“Oh, okay, fine. Come here, then.”

“Hehe, thank you! Oh, but don’t think I’d be willing to do this with any man, okay? I’m just doing this because I trust you.”

“I’m honored. All right princess, let’s go.”

“Go, go, go!”

I held Fia firmly in my arms and jumped up into the sky.

“Our village has a custom where, when you reach a certain age, you go out on a journey by yourself outside the safety of the forest. I’ve been out traveling for a few years now.”

“Really? Actually, I’ve been planning on traveling the world when I grow up, too.”

“Is that so? I’d be lying if I said it’s easy, but it sure is fun.”

I’d heard elves almost never leave their forests, but Fia gave off a completely different impression.

“I hope I don’t offend you by saying this, but you’re pretty different than the image I had in my head of elves.”

“It’s okay, I agree. I’m different for sure. Normally, elves never leave the forest and stubbornly insist that mixing with other cultures is a waste and all that. I love traveling, personally. I wanted to see the world, so I headed out as soon as I was allowed to.”

“Haha, I see. I like that.”

“Hehe, I’m glad. Well, after traveling for about 10 years, my elder told me I had to come back. I was getting close when those brutes assaulted me.”

“Wouldn’t it be pretty easy for you to deal with those morons?”

“Yeah. If I’d used the spirits, I could’ve dealt with them without even blinking. I guess I got careless.”

Apparently, she had decided to do some work on her way back to the forest and got attacked during one of those jobs. She’d grouped up with other adventurers she’d ran into on the road. It turns out they’d been after her from the start, and poisoned her after gaining her trust.

“They really took their time, too. After we’d finished one job together, a child came over to thank me by giving me a drink. I had no idea the guys had paid him to give me the poisoned drink. By the time I’d noticed and started running, well...”

“They chased you, and that’s when I found you. Something like that?”

“Pretty much. Those pigs got what they deserved. Though, in a weird way, I’m kind of thankful to them—I mean, I wouldn’t have met you otherwise.”

“That’s... one way of looking at it. I suppose I am too, then. I’m also glad I met you, after all.”

“I’m an honest person. I like showing my gratitude where it’s due.”

I did save her life, but I wasn’t expecting her to open up this much. We continued to float through the sky in good spirits. Soon enough, we arrived at an open field. It wasn’t very large by any means, but its placement and its complete lack of monsters stood out to me.

“Our forest is beyond this clearing. There’s a barrier set up to stop monsters and outsiders from entering.”

In other words, if I kept flying like this, I might have been treated like an “outsider” too, so I decided to land in the clearing. I didn’t want to cause any problems.

“This is enough. I can get home from here—this place is like our backyard.”

“I see. So, what happens if I try to follow you in there?”

“The barrier wouldn’t physically block you from entering, but you would be identified as an enemy and showered in arrows. Even if you were to avoid the

rain of arrows, they would play with your sense of direction to make sure you never reached the village.”

“I see. So they’re pretty strict on outsiders, huh? At least that should make your forests pretty safe, then.”

“True, it’s safe in there. But that’s also one of the reasons why most elves are so proud and closed off. They never want to come out, and that’s something I don’t like.”

Fia sat down on a nearby boulder and tapped the space next to her with a bitter smile. It was still only early afternoon, so I decided to sit next to her.

“I really loved the feeling of flying. And it was so fast, too—we got here in no time. Normally, this journey would take at least two full days.”

“If I go too fast, the wind becomes a problem and it’s hard to maneuver. But yeah, it feels good.”

“Hey, Sirius. You got cut off earlier, but can you teach me how to do that?”

“I don’t mind, but I doubt you’ll be able to get further than a few meters. It really eats up mana.”

“I don’t mind. I’ve been trying to figure out a way to fly with my magic, but I keep falling.”

Apparently, she had tried using the spirits’ wind magic to hurl herself into the sky. That went just as well as one would imagine—it was more like being thrown, and the wind wasn’t able to keep her floating, either.

“At least I was able to use the wind to slow my fall so I didn’t hurt myself, but yeah. I quickly found out that flying that way doesn’t work. I thought I’d never be able to, so please teach me!”

She really seemed desperate to learn.

“I’ll do anything in return! I’ll even be your girlfriend when you grow up!”

“Well, that’s an interesting offer. Anyway, Fia, you really should give up on trying to learn my way of flying.”

“I see. I guess I’ll just give up, then.”

“No, don’t get me wrong. What I mean is, you have powerful wind spirits by your side. All you need is practice and you’ll be flying in no time.”

“Practice? But I just told you, it was more like being thrown. I didn’t really fly.”

“Based on what I heard, it shouldn’t be that hard at all. It’s all about how you use the wind. You see, there’s something called dynamic lift, which...”

Dynamic lift was how airplanes in my old world managed to fly. Fia looked lost, so I cut out an airplane model from wood and threw it to show her how it flew.

“See how when the wind hits the wings, it soars through the air? It’s all about wind direction and flow.”

“Wow, that’s amazing. Okay, now I feel like I can do it. But controlling it seems hard, and practicing would be dangerous. A fall could end up killing me.”

“I’m here to help. If you’re about to fall, I’ll swoop in and save you. That way you don’t need to be afraid of failing at all.”

“That would make things easier!”

Fia lit up with excitement and got ready to start right away. For starters, it was hard to get the wind to lift her up while she was standing, so she lay down on the ground.

“This looks pretty silly... but if I can fly, that doesn’t matter. Hey, why are you walking over there?”

I had been standing right beside her, but decided to move in front of her instead.

“I was trying to be subtle, but I could see up your skirt like that.”

“I don’t mind. You can look all you want.”

“Just start already.”

“I’m serious. Well, whatever. Oh, great tempest, make me fly!”

Suddenly, a gust of wind blew up from under Fia. The winds were quite fierce. Initially, I was afraid it would hurt her, but she was clearly in control and made sure the wind didn’t hit her face. I was impressed at how well she was controlling

the spell, and watched as her body slowly started to float.

“I-I did it! I’ll be able to fly in no ti—eek!”

She got really excited and lost control. The wind grew even stronger and tossed her straight into the air.

“I should go get her.”

I watched for a second, then swooped in and grabbed her before she hit the ground. As I caught her in the air, Fia wrapped her arms around me in excitement.

“I did it, Sirius! I did it!”

“You did. I’m happy for you.”

“Hurry, hurry! Get me down so I can fly again!”

I landed, and Fia instantly got down to start practicing again. Each attempt made her fly a little bit higher, though she did fail often. Of course, I would jump in and save her every time she did. I thought the amount of times she fell would have made her reluctant to continue, but...

“Whoopsie! Thanks for saving me, Sirius. My beloved prince!”

“You’re a tenacious one, aren’t you?”

I guess the way I carried her made her feel like a princess, which she seemed to enjoy. She got better after each failed attempt, and it didn’t take more than a few hours before she was able to keep herself floating without problems. Eventually, we decided to have a short lunch break. Since she had lost all her food while running away from the men, I shared some of the food Dii had packed for me with her. She got really excited when she tasted the mayonnaise that I had taught Dii to make.

We continued to practice after lunch. At that point, she had gotten the basics down, and was able to fly without falling that often. She even started to do loops in the air, which made me see straight up her skirt. I decided to keep that to myself. As the evening set in, she had finally gotten to a point where I felt safe to leave her flying by herself.

“Okay, that’ll do it. You pass.”

“Yay! Thank you so much, Sirius!”

After exchanging a high-five with Fia, I looked up at the setting sun. She noticed this and suddenly looked a bit sad.

“Are you leaving?”

“Yeah, I think I have to. But I remember this place, so I’ll come visit again.”

“I’d love that, but... once I go back to the village, I won’t be let out again for another 10 years. I’m sorry.”

“What? That’s dumb. And I guess I can’t enter the forest either, huh?”

“It would be difficult, yes. Elves never let outsiders in. Even if I were to vouch for you, I doubt you’d get far.”

“Sadly, discrimination—as dumb as it is—is found everywhere.”

“Yeah, I know. We get along well, so why should our races matter?! They blab about needing 10 years to be purified of the outside’s influence, or whatever, but that’s just stupid.”

Fia angrily kicked a rock. She looked upset for a second, but soon faced me with a smile again.

“I’ve said it several times already, but thank you so much, Sirius. I want to give you something in return. Is there anything I can do?”

“It’s okay, having gotten to know you is plenty.”

“That’s not enough! I want to give you something, I... Oh! Here, have this!”

She held out the mithril knife I had borrowed to cut the wyvern. I did want that, but it seemed far too expensive to be a “thank you” gift. It even had carvings on it, which looked personal to her. I felt bad accepting it.

“This isn’t like a family heirloom or something, right? I wouldn’t want it if that were the case.”

“It’s fine! They said I should take care of it when they gave it to me. I know you’ll do that for me, Sirius. Besides, if it wasn’t for you, I wouldn’t even be here.”

“Well, all right. I’ll take it then, thank you.”

“I have one more thing for you. Will you accept that, too?”

“I feel like this knife is plenty. Really, you don’t have to give me anything else.”

“Well, just close your eyes for a second.”

I wasn’t sure why she had asked me that, but I trusted her. I did what she asked, and, a few seconds later, I felt something soft against my lips. I opened my eyes and saw Fia’s beautiful face right in front of mine. Stunned, I took a second to admire her beauty. She opened her eyes and blushed.

“I told you to keep them closed.”

“Aren’t you supposed to kiss my cheek, or my forehead, or something?”

“You seem way too cool about this... that was my first, you know?”

“I’m surprised, trust me. Is that like another one of those elf customs, or...?”

We’d just met that day. Sure, we had been through a lot together, but I didn’t think it possible for her to have fallen for me already. I was a child, to boot. Different races had different customs, so maybe it was a proof of friendship or something.

“No, not at all. It surprised me too, but, Sirius, I’m in love with you. I’m so certain that I’ve already made a reservation! I told you earlier, right? I’d do anything for you. I meant it.”

“I thought you were joking... Wait, ‘reservation?’ What are you reserving?”

“You. I’ll be able to leave the forest again in 10 years. At that point, you’ll be an adult. I guess you’ll have a girlfriend or two by then, or you might even be engaged. In that case, I’ll be fine with being your mistress.”

“Seriously?”



“Yes. It might come as a surprise to you, but I’m 252 years old. I’ll look like this even when you get older, you know? Of course, I’ll give up if you don’t want me, but...”

She looked genuinely sad about the thought. I’d feel terrible shutting her down, so I agreed.

“Okay, got it. I’ll come back in 10 years and, if your feelings haven’t changed, I’ll happily accept.”

“Really?!”

She was a fun girl, and a real beauty too. I had a wonderful time with her, so even I had started to feel a little affection for her. Fia lit up with joy, then wrapped her arms around me and kissed me again.

“Okay! I’ll wait for you here in 10 years, Sirius. I can’t wait to meet you again.”

“You got it. I’ll be here.”

“I’ll be waiting!”

We shook hands, and Fia started to head toward the dense forest. She waved until I lost sight of her. I checked just to make sure she was gone, then smiled and jumped back into the air.

And that was how I met and befriended an elf. I wasn’t sure what would happen down the line, but I was already excited to see her again.



A few days later, I decided to take another trip to Adload. I went in the opposite direction this time, but I was still greeted with immense forests. After I

had traveled for quite some time, I considered heading back until a strange sound caught my attention. It rang through the mountains. When I followed it, it led me to a single house in the midst of the forest. I could see smoke rising from the chimney, so it was obvious someone lived there. It made me wonder who'd set up a house in a monster-infested forest.

I landed some ways away, just to make sure I didn't scare the people living there, then walked up toward the house. I kept myself hidden as I snuck up to the house. There, I spotted an old man. He was tall and muscular, and was in the process of chopping wood with an axe—the source of the loud sound. Something seemed off about him, though. He was no ordinary old man, that much was clear. He wore simple commoner's clothes, with a white shirt and black trousers, but his well-defined muscles and a long scar running across his left eye stood out. He looked old, but I could practically feel his killer instinct by the look in his eye and the way he moved. He looked like an ex-soldier or some kind of fighter.

“What? Stop hiding and come out.”

He noticed me?! I hadn't been going all out, but I was still making an effort to stay hidden. Who was this guy? He took me by surprise, but I had no reason to stay hidden. I stepped out.

“A child? Where did you come from, brat?”

“It's nice to meet you. My name is Sirius. I was out for a walk in the area and spotted your house, so I came to visit.”

“Hmph, you're a weird one. I'll say it now—if you do anything fishy, I won't hesitate to beat you.”

The man glared at me with bloodlust in his eyes. Sure, I might have looked “fishy,” but he was being too paranoid, in my opinion. I had barely even said a word!

“I'm just a normal human. I have no intention of hurting you, sir.”

I held my arms up in the air. In response, the man just turned back and continued to chop wood. He was completely ignoring me now. If he kept doing that, it would feel like coming here was a waste.

“Excuse me—I hope you don't mind me asking, but why are you living all the

way out here?”

“I don’t know how you found me, scamp, but I won’t tell you anything!”

He literally spat at me as he shut me down. It sounded to me like he had the wrong idea. I figured I should start by explaining.

“I think you’ve got the wrong idea, sir. I came here completely by chance.”

“How'd you get here then, huh? How did a ‘normal child’ like you come all the way out here alone?”

“I’ve developed my own type of magic, which lets me travel fast. I happened to spot your house while I was traveling.”

“You really don’t know who I am, then?”

“Not at all. I can tell that you’re very skilled just from looking, though.”

A mere glance was enough to show that this guy meant business. He made the punks from the other day look like absolute trash in comparison. It looked like being honest was the right choice; the man looked over at me, intrigued.

“Hmph. You don’t seem half bad yourself, kid.”

“I’m nowhere near your level, that’s for sure.”

“Hahaha! Well said! I don’t really get why you’re out here, but still! A visitor is a visitor! Come, I’ll make some tea.”

His attitude completely changed in a second, and he headed into the house. The interior was much like you’d expect, completely made of wood. There was only one room, but the furniture was beautifully crafted. He had a nice set of chairs, a table, and covers made from some kind of monster or animal skin. It was clear that he lived completely off of nature in a place even more remote than my house. Just who was he?

I sat down and he soon joined me with some tea. He continued to surprise me when he took his cup of steaming hot tea and downed it in one go. How had that not burned him?!

“Phew, that hit the spot! Now, brat, what do you want?”

“Like I said earlier, I came here by chance. Could I ask your name, sir?”

He could have been a criminal on the run, but I had a feeling that that wasn't the case. The man looked to be lost in thought for a second before he scratched his chin and nodded.

"I'm Liole. I bet you've heard of me?"

"Liole? Hmm, it does sound familiar... wait."

I did come across that name in Albert's Journey. He was said to be the strongest human swordsman. It was said that he could cleave a boulder in two with a simple swing of his sword, and that he could even cut a dragon down by himself. Because of that, people had started calling him...

"Are you Liole, The Great Swordsman?"

"I was a long time ago. Now I'm just a retired old man."

I thought he looked strong, but I didn't expect him to be among the best of the best. He didn't act the part at all. He had seemed ready to fight when I first showed up, but the moment he learned I wasn't a threat, he went right back to being a simple old man.

"You don't look like someone who retired by their own will. Could I ask the reason you're out here, sir?"

"Hmph, what a nosy brat. Well, why not? I'm bored."

He started to pour more tea into his empty cup and began to talk.

"I loved training. I spent my days training and challenging the most renowned fighters I could find. Before I knew it, I was being called 'The Great Swordsman' or whatever. At that point, no one wanted to fight me anymore, and I grew bored."

He didn't take any pride in the name. Clearly, he found joy in actual battle instead. Yet here he was, hiding all by himself.

"One day, I thought of something—instead of waiting for an opponent to magically appear, I could train them myself. I announced that I'd take students from around the kingdom, and a bunch came."

That wasn't surprising. If the strongest swordsman ever started to accept students, a lot of people would have obviously been interested.

“But the ones who actually showed up were just nobles after the fame. I still figured I’d try training them. If they truly wanted to get stronger, it would show soon enough. But no—they were all a bunch of weaklings. If I went too hard on them, they’d run; and when I held back, they showed no improvement whatsoever. I tried to tell the king several times, but I was ignored. Eventually, I gave up on them and decided to go search for students myself.”

The word “noble” made me think of my own rotten “dad,” and I could see why he had hated training people like that. Commoners with real drive and skill had probably tried to attend, but I’m sure that the nobles had just used their power to get ahead of them. I could see why he had chosen to go out and find students himself.

“I found a few promising ones, but that made those stuck-up nobles mad. They told my students to learn their place. While I was away, they gathered them up and killed them all. That pissed me off, so I gathered those morons up, took them to the king, and cut their leader’s arm off. That made things a bit tricky, as you can imagine, so I decided to hide out here. That’s how I ‘retired.’”

He finished his story and took another sip of his tea. I finally understood why he was out here. I would have done the same in those circumstances—he wasn’t to blame at all. It was all the fault of those foolish nobles and the king who had refused to listen.

“You were too soft.”

“What?”

“You were too soft on those stupid nobles! You should’ve stripped those bastards of their precious titles. Now that would’ve shown them!”

“True.”

“You tried to talk to the king but were ignored, right? Well, in that case, you should have made it clear that the situation was worth noting. They won’t stop acting like assholes unless they’re taught a lesson. You should’ve smacked them around a bit; made the king notice.”

“I had been told that I went too far several times, but never that I had been too soft. Hah.”

“You should’ve been more careful, too! A teacher doesn’t just teach—they create a safe environment for their students!”

I wouldn’t be able to live with myself if my students died before me. As their teacher, I saw it as my duty to protect them. It was clear that the nobles were the bad guys in his story, but I also felt like he was at fault for not protecting his students. He should have been there for them.

“You’re one precocious scamp. What do you know?!”

“You should admit when you’ve made a mistake, no matter what your position is. I might still be a child, but I’m trying to become a teacher.”

“You want to be a teacher? You’ve got some resolve, kid, I’ll give you that. But that’s far from enough—you need the skill to back it up.”

“Well, how about we put my skills to the test, then?”

I had tried to sound as intimidating as I could, but his burst of laughter told me I hadn’t succeeded.

“Haha! Very well! I’ll teach you a lesson, brat.”

His eyes shifted again—he was no longer the retired old man, but the skilled swordsman. I would see how strong he really was. We went outside and stood in a large clearing by his house with wooden swords.

The sword I was holding was made for kids. He told me it was left over from his dead students. While it had clearly seen use in the past, it was still well-maintained. They clearly meant a lot to him. I felt like a mere wooden sword would break after a few blows, but he assured me it was sturdy enough as long as he didn’t spar with someone of his own caliber. I felt really excited—I hadn’t fought anything but monsters in a long time, so being able to fight a strong human made me happy. He seemed to be thinking the same thing, and clearly missed the thrill of the fight.

“If you hit me even once, you win. Don’t worry, I won’t go too hard on you.”

“Thank you. You’ll end up regretting holding back, though.”

“Hmph. Stop bragging and show me what you’ve got, brat.”

It was time to teach him a lesson. He was clearly underestimating me, since he

hadn't even bothered to get into a combat stance. I would start by making sure he took our fight seriously.

I slowly walked forward and tensed up before jumping toward him. He looked surprised at my sudden burst of speed, but still swung his sword in reaction. He was clearly skilled, since he was able to react so quickly. His strike was half-assed, though, and I dodged it with ease. I jumped out of the way of his sword, struck him gently in his side, and placed my free hand on his abdomen. After I gained some distance from him, I shook the hand that had touched his stomach.

"If I'd had a knife in this hand, you know what would've happened, right?"

"It would have been fatal for sure. I knew I'd gotten rusty, but I didn't know it had gotten this bad..."

He shook his head and smiled bitterly. He turned to face me again, but his smile was totally different. He was clearly about to go all out.

"I'm sorry, and thank you! I hadn't even noticed how much of the old me had rotted away!"

He roared like a wild beast, and it echoed through the forest. I could actually sense the nearby monsters flee from the area. Okay, this was too much! If he was this scary now, just how strong was he back in his prime?! Standing face to face with someone like him made me recall the days where I trained with my master. I felt like crying whenever I thought about the hell he put me through, but I was over that already.

The man was clearly serious now. It was time for round two. He lifted his sword, stood still, and waited. It was a stance focused on ending combat in one blow—it suited him.

"I've never seen that stance before, kid. What style is it?"

"I'm self taught, so it's my own style."

My stance was a unique one for sure. I held my sword in my dominant hand and leaned forward. I put my other hand behind my back to hide it. I had learned this from my teacher, but he had been self taught too; as such it didn't really have a name. He had simply taught me to fight based on his own long experience in battle. It was a fighting style made to adapt, and I was the one to

settle on this particular stance.

“I see. Okay, here I come!”

The moment he took a step forward, I activated “Boost.” Then, my mind entered combat mode.

| Liole |

How careless of me. My life had been about fighting, about training. I had always been the strongest. How did I let myself get this rusty? How many contenders after my title did I strike down with a single blow? They were all too weak. The thrill of battle faded quickly after that.

I was bored, so I decided to make the perfect opponent. Training students myself and fighting them was a great plan, or so I’d thought. In the end, all I’d gotten was a bunch of greedy nobles with sticks up their asses. Any students with actual promise were quickly suppressed by the nobles. Some shitheads that wanted to buy their way to the top had also showed up, but I taught those morons a lesson.

I decided to start looking for my own students. Those who wanted to get stronger so badly, they swung their swords with purpose and resolve. Those who genuinely wanted to defeat me. I finally found some promising ones, and started to train them. Those days had been great. Seeing them grow stronger by the day really brought back my old joy for fighting. Then those damn nobles ruined it all.

I did cut their leader’s arm off, but that wasn’t enough. Just being around them made my skin crawl. I left the kingdom and hid out here by myself. Building a house and living off of nature became my life, but the hole left in my heart was never healed. My body started to rot away along with my thrill for battle. My sword started to feel heavier by the day, and I no longer felt the need to fight.

That’s when I met that brat. He was a strange one. Even skilled adventurers rarely showed up in the middle of nowhere where I lived, yet he casually strolled

in like he was out doing some shopping. I thought he was out here scouting for those darn nobles, but he was alone.

This strange kid had heard about me, but didn't seem to care much. He really got my interest. He was nothing more than a child, but he acted really cocky. I wanted to teach him a lesson, but he ended up teaching me one. He teased me and I took the bait; I ended up walking right into his trap.

I took him to the backyard for a sparring session, thinking I'd be able to smack him around with ease.

One or two light jabs would surely put him in his place, I thought, but the kid seemed oddly confident. I had never seen someone move the way he did on the battlefield. He leaned forward, practically crawling, and was suddenly on top of me. While he was fast and did take me by surprise, I'm sure I wouldn't have let him get that close in my prime. He easily dodged my desperate attempt at deflecting him and touched my stomach.

"If I'd had a knife in this hand, you know what would've happened, right?"

That made me furious—not at him, but at myself. What was I doing? I wasn't actually hurt, but that move woke me up. He wasn't a mere child, he was a worthy opponent.

The embers left from my burning passion for combat were rekindled. I hadn't felt like that in so long. I apologized, then thanked him. We both prepared to spar again. The kid... no, my opponent, got into a strange stance that I had never seen before, but that didn't matter. No opponent had ever stood a chance against my "single strike" style. His stance would not matter.

Single strike style, "Heaven's Might." It was a stance that had you lift your sword above your head, so that you could end everything in one single, powerful strike from above. A single, mighty strike that could easily slice through steel. The technique was rather simple, but, in the hands of the right user, it was nearly undodgeable.

I lunged forward, swinging down with "Heaven's Might," but... he avoided it. Not only that, but he had just barely twisted his body sideways to completely avoid the strike, clearly having seen through my technique from the start. His

amazing reflexes and combat sense made me smile. I quickly followed up with “Rising Wings” from below, but he easily dodged that as well. He swung back a strike of his own, but I managed to block it in time.

Not only did he evade my strikes, but he had time to counterattack too. I felt the adrenaline quickly filling my body.

Based on his mana flow, I’d say he had used “Boost” to strengthen himself, but I had never seen someone use the spell so brilliantly before. I followed up with “Crushing Barrage,” a string of eight powerful strikes, but he managed to block half and dodge the rest. I then tried “Crushing Blow,” which was a strike that filled my blade with mana before creating a shockwave from the tip of the blade. However, he swiftly leaped out of the way as soon as I moved. He ended up behind me with a counterattack. I was able to rush forward to avoid his attack. I can’t hit him at all! This is incredible!

I could feel my strength slowly returning to my rusty body from the harsh battle, and it filled me with euphoria. Finally... finally, a worthy opponent. The Great Swordsman? The strongest? Hah! Don’t make me laugh. There was someone stronger right here in front of me! If only I had my trusted partner—my old greatsword—by my side, and not this piece of wood. I wanted to change the rules of our combat: no points, but a duel where only one remained standing. I wanted nothing more than to change into my combat gear and fight him to the death. I wanted this to go on forever.

Filled with adrenaline and excitement, I moved forward. Unfortunately, my old body soon reached its limit. My breathing was getting heavy. I was out of my prime, that much was certain, but I was still strong. Had I only met him earlier... But it was too late to mull over that. I deflected a blow aimed at my neck, and he jumped back to gain some distance. It was strange—why didn’t he follow up with another strike? I tried to calm my breathing. That was when I noticed that he was breathing pretty heavily too.

“Looks like we’re both at our limits. Let’s end this.”

“Yeah.”



He was at his limit as well, huh? It was hard to tell, but if I looked closely, I could see his arm trembling faintly. He was truly skilled at hiding his own exhaustion. Had we continued a little longer, I would have surely collapsed before him. But he declared his intention to end the fight, so I had to go along with that. I calmed my ragged breathing and firmly gripped my sword.

Now, come! I'd put everything I had left in one strike! He was fast, rushing straight towards me. I'd win in terms of pure strength, but I just couldn't read his swift movements well. He swung his blade quickly and carefully, while I, the brute that I was, just swung straight down with all my might. Our blades met with a crash that was so loud, it was hard to believe it came from wood. It reverberated through the forest as our sword splintered in half. Thinking the incredible fight had come to end, I let out a sigh.

But I was a fool—I didn't realize the fight was still going until his knee had hit me straight in the jaw. Haha! That's it! The fight doesn't end just because your weapon breaks. You keep fighting! As his knee hit my jaw, I passed out.

| Sirius |

“Phew... what a reckless old man.”

He was much stronger than I expected. Seriously, what was that insane barrage of blows? Eight in a row?! He'd moved like some character straight out of a manga! Had I not been using “Boost,” the fight would have ended right then and there. Not only that, but he was clearly past his prime. Just how terrifying had he been at his strongest? The only reason I had been able to win was because he let his guard down after our weapons broke. No wooden sword, no matter how sturdy, could take being hit with such force over and over.

To be honest, without my new skills—such as “Boost”—my only tactic against someone like him would have been to run as fast as I could. He was laughing and smiling the whole time we fought. He clearly loved the thrill of the battle more than anything. That was the only reason I had been able to connect with such an obvious kick. Had he not been so overcome with emotion, he would have easily avoided it. It definitely did a number on his head, so he had passed out. But now I knew exactly why they called him the strongest swordsman. It was no mere title, it was the truth. Neither of us were in our prime, but still. I hadn’t fought anyone so seriously since my old teacher all those years ago. I wasn’t as excited about the fight as the old man, but I still found myself pretty satisfied for the first time in a while. I’d love to spar with him again sometime.

“Ugh... hah... haha!”

He suddenly burst out laughing.

“That was fun! I haven’t fought like that in years! I feel like I’ve come back to life!”

He got back up like it was nothing with a huge smile on his face. I thought he might have a concussion from that blow, but he seemed completely fine.

“You win! I’m sorry, but could you tell me your name again?”

“You forgot, huh? I’m Sirius, sir.”

“Drop the formality! You just beat me, after all!”

He put his hands on his hips and laughed so loud it echoed through the forest. He had suddenly stopped calling me “kid” and “brat,” clearly treating me like his equal.

“But I feel bad—that was such a cheap shot. Had I not gotten that chance, I would’ve lost for sure.”

“Oh, please! That was my fault for letting my guard down. Don’t mention it again. You’ll make me die of embarrassment!”

“Got it. I won, then. Let’s leave it at that.”

“That’s right, you won. Haha, that was fun. I couldn’t hit you with any of my techniques!”

“I know you’re excited, but we should probably rest a bit. We’re both pretty beat up, after all.”

I hadn’t been hit directly, but I was still covered in sweat. As for him, his clothes were torn from various close calls from my sword.

“All right, let’s head inside and rest. Urgh?!”

It seemed like damage from my kick had finally set in, as he fell straight through the front door on his way inside. I thought he was a monster for getting up from that, but I guess he was human after all. We both cleaned ourselves up, then sat down to have some tea.

“Phew! That hit the spot.”

We both said the same thing in unison. Well, I was about his age in my previous life, after all. I was nothing more than another old man enjoying his tea.

“Phew, nothing like a cup of tea after battle. Well then, Sirius. Let me start by thanking you.”

He suddenly bowed his head. I didn’t want to offend him, so I decided to accept his thanks.

“That’s fine, but raise your head, old man. I really enjoyed that fight too.”

“Even so! I’ve been waiting for someone like you for so long! Had you not showed up here, I would have just rotted into dust! So thank you!”

He honestly looked like he’d been brought back from the dead. In fact, he looked 10 years younger. I had a lot of fun fighting him too. We both needed it. The old man poured me another cup of tea, then got serious.

“I have something to ask you—would you fight me again?”

“You mean another day and not right now, right?”

“Of course. With this old body, I couldn’t even if I wanted to right now. I want to fight you at my best, of course.”

“You mean you’re going to train? At your age?”

“Hmph! I’ll be fine. I need to get some of this rust off. Besides, don’t you want to fight me when I’m serious?”

“It’s that obvious?”

“It is. I could tell by the way you fought. Your style is all about sneaking around and getting in cheap shots, yet you continued attacking me from the front. It’s like you wanted to train yourself by fighting me where I’m strongest.”

While he seemed to fight purely on instinct, he did keep an eye out for the small details after all. He was right—my fighting style had always been about surprise attacks and getting under people’s defenses. My old job had been all about assassinations and sneaking into places to cause chaos, after all. Had I really fought seriously, I would have used “Magnum” at close range and thrown “String” around to trip him up. But I knew that someday, I might be in a situation where I’d be unable to use magic, so this had been a perfect opportunity to train my abilities in hand-to-hand combat. I loved the feeling of training just as much as he did.

“So you’ll be fighting to train, and I’ll be fighting for the thrill of it. Win-win, don’t you think?”

“Of course. If anything, thank you. That’s perfect.”

“Good!”

We exchanged a firm handshake. Although I would be getting stronger, his body would be getting weaker with age. Training himself back to his prime at that age would surely be difficult.

“Hahaha! I never thought I’d be meeting my match at this age! I love it!”

At the very least, he seemed excited at the idea of pushing himself, since fighting was his life. I was the one who had to watch out. I knew he’d be incredibly powerful as soon as he got serious.

And that’s how, shortly after I met my first friend, I also met a perfect rival. We continued to chat while we rested and waited for our strength to return. We both had lots of stories to tell, and time just flew by. I showed him my spells, which surprised even someone like him—a battle-hardened veteran.

“Those are some fun spells. I’d love to fight while you use those one day. I’m having a hard time thinking about a way to get around those!”

“You’re a crazy old man, you know that?”

“Damn right! Hahaha!”

After we finally got our strength back, I prepared to leave.

“All right, old man—I’ll be back within 10 days.”

“Good. I’ll make sure I’m strong enough to use my old pal here by then.”

“Don’t push yourself too hard.”

“Hmph! Don’t treat me like an old weakling!”

He showed me his “old pal”—a monstrous-looking greatsword. It had to weigh at least a few hundred kilograms by itself, yet he seemed serious about being able to wield it like a regular sword by the time I got back.

Excited about our next meeting, I headed back home. When I returned and walked through the door, Erina was already there to greet me.

“I’m home, Erina.”

“Welcome home, Sirius.”

I had already headed out for several days at a time at this point, but Erina would always be there waiting for me when I got back. It felt like she was watching me, somehow. She always knew exactly when to be behind the door as I got home.

Although she greeted me calmly, her eyes went wide in shock when she saw my clothes.

“What... What happened?! I’ll treat you at once!”

I forgot that my clothes were a complete mess from the fight.

“I-It’s okay, Erina! It’s just my clothes. I’m not hurt at all.”

“Strip, now! I have to check.”

“Huh?! Here?!”

She was about to tear my clothes off to make sure I was fine, but I managed to convince her to let me go to my room first, at least. As we walked through the house, we ran into Noel, who was carrying a dust pan around.

“Hey, Sirius, welcome home! I thought I heard Erina getting all worked up over something. What happ—Why are your clothes all ripped up?!”

“I’m hooome! Well, it’s a long story. But I’m not hurt, I promise.”

“All right, if you say so. Anyways, Dii said he had something to tell you.”

“Got it. I’ll go change, then head to the living room. Tell him to meet me there, please.”

Erina refused to leave my side until she had personally checked me for injuries. The reason Noel had been so chill about the whole thing was that she was, quite frankly, used to this. It did feel a bit weird to change in front of Erina. She was like a mother to me, but still. She limited herself to nodding happily while she watched, seeing that I wasn’t injured.

“You sure have grown up fast, Sirius.”

“You mean my muscles?”

We headed toward the living room, where Noel and Dii were waiting next to some kind of container.

“Welcome home, Sirius.”

“I’m home, Dii. Noel said you wanted to talk?”

“Yes. Look at this.”

“Oh, is it done?”

I looked over at the container next to Dii, which was filled with small white cubes submerged in a liquid.

“What do you think?”

“It looks perfect. You really outdid yourself.”

I had told him how to make tofu. They had some beans here very similar to soybeans and, after checking the taste and such myself, I’d deemed it pretty much exactly the same. They had some weird name, but I just called them soybeans, and the servants started to copy me. So they were soybeans now.

Anyway, there were lots of things that could be made that I wanted to eat again, so I had started teaching Dii how to use them. One of those things was

tofu, and he had finally finished. I'd taught him how, but he was the one who actually made it. I felt bad leaving all the work to him, as it was a lengthy and hard process.

"I'm sorry for always leaving the dirty work to you, Dii."

"Don't be. It's good practice. I enjoy it."

"His cooking is the best! Hey, so is this the tofu stuff? It looks weird!"

I guess they didn't have anything like it here. The reason I knew how to make all this stuff in the first place was because cooking was a bit of a hobby of mine in my old life. At first, I'd loved traveling, just to taste the various dishes the world had to offer. I'd eventually grown bored of that and wanted to make them myself. That's when I started to learn and I felt pretty confident about my cooking.

"Have you tasted it yet, Dii? What did you think?"

"It's okay, but I feel like something's missing."

"It can be eaten by itself, but it's usually a side dish."

Noel must have thought the consistency was fun, because she kept poking the tofu. At any rate, this was great timing—tofu would be perfect with dinner.

"Oh! Since you've gathered us all here, I guess that means..."

"You'll be teaching us a new dish?"

"That's right! I found this in the sea earlier."

They always loved it when I taught them new recipes. I had been using my servants to taste all the dishes I made here from my old world, and that gave me a general idea of what they liked. Noel loved mayonnaise and pudding, while Dii loved fried chicken. Erina took a liking to French toast, since it was the food I'd cooked for her when I'd saved her. It seemed like that had really stuck with her. This time, their excitement died down as soon as I showed them what I had brought. They clearly didn't look at seaweed as food.

"What is that? It's all slimy and gross."

"It's seaweed. It lives in the sea. We call it 'kombu' where I come from."

I spotted it on my way back home. The trip had taken about half a day, which was perfect—the seaweed had dried up plenty on the way.

“Is this really edible?”

“You don’t really eat it by itself. You squeeze out the juice from inside.”

“Sirius, should you not relax a bit before making food?”

Erina walked over, looking concerned. I had just gotten home. Maybe I should rest a little.

“You’re right, I’ll do that. Thank you, Erina.”

“You two rest as well. And Sirius, you are going to tell me what happened and why your clothes were so torn up, do you understand?”

She looked terrifying. I definitely had to tell her the truth. So, when we all sat down for some tea, I told them about how I met Liole. The three of them were at a loss for words.

“What’s wrong, guys? Is it really that weird?”

“Of course it is! I’ve never met him personally, but I’ve heard stories of The Great Swordsman, Liole! They’ve written books about him!”

“He’s truly a legend.”

“I don’t know much about fighting, but even I’ve heard about him. They said he took on a thousand men on his own once.”

He just looked like an old geezer when I first met him. He seriously fought a thousand men alone? Talk about a crazy old man.

“And then what? Did you fight him? Haha., Even you’re not that dumb, I guess.”

“No, I did. He was really strong! I won this time, but I’m not sure I’ll be able to next time.”

“You did?! And won?! Y-You must be kidding, but you seem so serious...”

Noel looked completely shocked, but I was telling the truth. I told them that I would go fight him again, but Erina cut in with a nod.

“I see, so that’s why your clothes were all torn up. Sirius, just promise me you won’t push yourself too hard.”

“Well, I have to push myself to get stronger.”

“Even so, I’ll reiterate—please... don’t push yourself too hard.”

“Got it.”

I knew Erina was just worried about me. It would do me no good trying to argue, so I just nodded along. I’d hate to make her worry every time I left, so it would be nice if I had some way of talking to her while I was out.

“You sure are incredible, though, Sirius. First, you meet and befriend an elf, then you spar with a legendary swordsman?”

“I just ran into them by pure chance.”

“You’re so lucky! I want to meet them too! Hey, Sirius, tell me—you said that elf was a real looker, right? Did you fall in love with her, by any chance? Hmm?”

“Sirius? Please, introduce me to this elf. I’d... very much like to meet her.”

Erina suddenly turned very serious, looking like a concerned mother. I didn’t want Erina to get mad at Fia, so I decided not to tell her about the kissing and what not.

“So anyways, I’m going back to fight Liole again. Next time I’ll just wear whatever, since it’ll surely get ruined.”

“Very well. Please be careful, Sirius.”

“Of course. I will. Now then, Dii, how about we get started? Can you bring over the tofu?”

“Right away.”

We headed to the kitchen and started to cook. I wanted to make a seafood stew. There weren’t a lot of spices in this world, so there weren’t many things to make a good base with. At least I’d found the seaweed, which was perfect for this dish. It was possible the taste was different from what I was used to, though, so I tested it before doing anything else.

First, I cleaned the dirt off the seaweed with a cloth, then I put it in the pot

and heated it up. After I let it simmer for a bit, the base was ready. Thankfully, the taste was just like back home. I cut up some meat and vegetables that Dii had prepared and put them into the stew. Seasoning was scarce, so I used some salt and left it at that. The taste was pretty good.

“It’s simple, but it looks good. Won’t it be hard splitting a dish like this, though?”

“You don’t split it before serving. Everyone eats it together, taking little by little from the pot.”

Dii finished taking notes as he watched me, then had everyone come over to help carry the pot to the table. We didn’t have a gas cooker to keep the pot warm, though a mana oven left on the low setting did the trick. Erina and Noel peeked into the pot curiously.

“So this is the stew? I don’t see the gross stuff from earlier in there.”

“Is there any specific way to eat this dish?”

“It’s all on the bottom now, so avoid that part. You can eat it however you want. Some people like taking small amounts and eating them from their own plates, while others like sharing straight from the pot.”

“Straight from the pot? I could never...”

Erina looked conflicted. The thought of eating from the same pot as her master probably seemed rude to her.

“Stew like this is meant to be eaten together in a group—usually by families. It’s perfect for us, don’t you think?”

I smiled, then started eating. The taste wasn’t bad, though it was a little too bland. It definitely lacked seasoning, but the blandness had a certain charm to it.

“It’s for families...? Well, we are a family, so I guess we’ll have to, in that case.”

“Exactly! It’s for all of us, so let’s dig in—So hoooot!”

I had created chopsticks for everyone to use. Dii and Erina had gotten pretty used to them already, but Noel was still pretty terrible. She instantly messed up and the splashback from the pot burned her hand.

“Are you okay, Noel?! Did you get burned?!”

“Tehe, I’m good. I got it this time!”

“Stop pushing yourself. Give me your plate.”

“Dii...”

Noel gazed happily at Dii, who had started to help her with her food. They looked so cute together. They weren’t dating or anything, but I’d been rooting for them for years. Neither of them had made a move yet, so it would still probably take a while. While they were off in their own little world, Erina tried a piece of tofu and smiled.

“You were right, the tofu tastes even better like this.”

“It’s very healthy, too. You can eat lots of it, even if you’re on a diet.”

“Really?! Dii! Make lots of that stuff for me, got it?!”

“Relax, Noel, don’t eat so fast. You’ll burn your tongue.”

“Oh, don’t worry! It’s cooled down a lot by now—So hoooot!”

Noel really didn’t deal well with heat. Maybe that was one of the cat traits she had as a demi-human? I tried to explain that, even if the outside of the tofu had cooled down, the inside was still hot; but she had ignored me and taken a giant bite. That girl was the same as always. After a pleasant dinner, I went to help Dii and Noel with their respective training. In Dii’s case, that meant teaching him new cooking recipes. In Noel’s, I just showed her some new concepts for spells I’d been thinking of.

I didn’t have much to do, to be honest—just a few small comments here and there. You could say it was nice to have pupils who could handle themselves for the most part, but, as a teacher, it made me feel a little lonely. After hearing Liole’s story, I started to miss training students of my own. These two weren’t even really my students. I wanted my own. Fighting the old man must have rekindled an old flame in me, too. It made me think back to the time I’d decided to retire from fieldwork to become a mentor.

It all started when I’d met a certain girl. I had been sent out to take down an organization conducting illegal human experiments. I had infiltrated them easily

enough, and did my job. While I was there, I had discovered a group of confused children who'd been kept captive.

I had my company step in to help them. They returned the ones they could back home to their parents, and sent the rest to the foster system; but there had been one girl who'd refused to leave my side. Since I'd rescued her, she looked at me as some kind of hero, and grew very attached to me. Her parents had passed away, and she'd refused to leave my side, so I'd decided to take her in. I couldn't bring her with me on dangerous missions around the world, so I'd leave her with a female friend of mine whenever I had to work. Still, every time I'd return home, the girl would light up and cling to me.

After a while, the girl had gotten a little older, and said she wanted to learn my job. She wanted to help me do my work, so she could save people like I had saved her. I had to tell her the truth: my job wasn't like that, and I did bad things, too. I thought that would scare her off, but it didn't. She still wanted to learn.

There was something about her determination to do good that broke me. She felt like a daughter to me, and the feeling was mutual—she had started to call me “dad.” I wanted to make sure she would be safe when I wasn't around anymore, so I decided to start teaching her. That was how my career as a teacher began. I had started somewhat reluctantly, but once I finally got going, I absolutely loved it. Seeing my students grow was an incredible feeling.

But then, after I'd trained a group of students for quite some time... I'd died. What hadn't died, however, was my love for teaching. I wanted to continue.



A year had passed since then, and I was now eight. I would train with Liole every now and then, which had definitely helped me grow stronger. Recently, I had started going for walks through the dense forests instead of flying. Fighting off monsters and trekking through the tough terrain made for great training,

after all. I was on my way back from a training session with Liole and was scouting Adload's forests.

"I should eat soon."

After gathering up some interesting looking mushrooms, I glanced up at the sun and realized it was time for lunch. My servants usually took turns making my lunch. I could tell from a single glance that today's meal had been prepared by Erina. I sat down on a nearby rock and started to eat. The lunch box was filled with my favorite: meat and vegetable sandwiches. There were also various sides. It was a ton of food, but I was growing rapidly and needed a lot of protein.

"This is great. Oh, I should let her know where I am."

I pictured Erina in my head and sent a message.

"Um, this is Polaris. I'm eating lunch. No irregularities. Oh, and the food is delicious. Over."

I hadn't gone crazy—I was using "Call," a new spell I had created. It let me send a message through mana waves in the sky—much like radio waves—to whoever I imagined in my head. Apparently, it felt very strange to have a message suddenly play out in the receiver's head. It was a very handy spell, though I was the only one able to use it. It was a one-way form of communication.

It took a lot of mana to use, and, since the message traveled through the mana in the air, it could easily leak into other people's minds on the way. That was why I always used a code name when I sent them. I was still experimenting with its usage; but for now, I was just glad I could ease Erina's worries when I was out traveling. At some point, I wanted to see if it could be used to deliver messages through crowded areas, as well as incredibly long distances.

Apparently, there was a wind affinity spell that let you send messages across the sky. Unfortunately, it was possible to intercept them and listen in, so it had some flaws. "Call" definitely had a lot of potential, so I was careful when I used it. I needed to keep it as much of a secret as possible.

I finished my report and went back to eating. Erina's sandwiches were as delicious as always. I never got tired of them. I started to feel a presence nearby,

so I used “Search” to see what it was. With my radar up, I casually continued my lunch while the presence moved in closer. It was a giant boar-like monster with two large tusks—I think it was called a “beonifang.” It was after me, of course, and started rushing in my direction with its tusks aimed forward. It was fast, but an obvious frontal attack like that was super easy to dodge.

“You make this too easy.”

I hopped onto the beast’s back and jammed my mithril knife into its skull before it could react. I’d heard their hide was incredibly tough, but the mithril knife cut through it with ease. After trembling for a second, the monster fell, lifeless, to the ground.

“And there’s dinner! I hear this part is really delicious.”

These things had a tough hide and incredible strength, so they were pretty dangerous. Normally, it took a group of decently skilled adventurers to defeat them, but a simple jab with a sharp blade in the right spot was all I’d needed. The old man would surely be able to cleave something like this in half with ease.

As I started to skin the beast, I felt another presence from within the forest. I expanded the area of “Search,” and noticed other monsters running in the opposite direction. I spread it even further and started to pick up human readings. There were two, and they seemed to be running from the monsters. I guess that’s why they were running in that direction.

It was close enough that I didn’t need to fly there, so I started to rush through the forest by using “Boost” instead. After running for a bit, I spotted two children cowering on the ground. There was a monster charging straight toward them.

“Oh no you don’t!”

I jumped between them and kicked the beast right across the face. Thanks to “Boost,” the kick was powerful enough to send the monster flying through several trees before it crashed into the ground. Just to be sure, I fired off a “Magnum” shot and finished it off. It might have looked like my kick literally caused an explosion.

My “Magnum” had really gotten stronger over the years—even more than an

actual gun. The smell of blood would definitely attract more monsters, so I quickly helped the two children up. They were both demi-humans, one girl and one boy, and looked to be about my age—though the girl looked a bit older. They had silver, wolf-like ears and fluffy tails. Based on how similar their features were, I guessed that they were siblings. But they were truly in terrible shape.

They wore torn up rags and were sickly thin. In addition, they had bruises and cuts all over their bodies. The things that stood out the most, though, were the metal collars around their necks—those weren't an accessory. The boy was unconscious, but the girl gazed up at me in confusion and terror. She was only able to stare at me in fear, but she hugged the boy tightly to protect him.

“Ah... uh... ah...!”

She couldn't speak well, probably from thirst and exhaustion, but it was clear that she was doing everything she could to protect the boy. Sadly, I had seen lots of cases like this in my old life. Children abandoned by their countries, left to die by themselves, where horrible people would use them like slaves. Kids like them would be used like tools—when one broke, you'd just get a new one. Those kids had a certain look, as if devoid of light and life; but not this girl. She had clearly gone through the same, but her eyes were different. She was determined to fight to the bitter end.

Those eyes made me think of my students.



She was clearly terrified of me based on how much she was trembling, but she still got in front of the boy to protect him at all costs. Trying not to spook her, I very gently reached out and placed my hand on her head with a smile.

“It’s okay. I’m not going to hurt you.”

I used the same tone I had used with my students when I found them. It definitely helped a little bit. At the very least, she didn’t see me as an enemy.

“You did good protecting your brother. Don’t worry, you’re safe now. Leave the rest to me.”

I gently patted her head the same way Erina would pat mine. A single tear ran down her cheek, and the girl collapsed.

Children like them weren’t a rare sight, sadly. No one would blame you if you just looked the other way in a situation like that. Heck, most people probably would have ignored it. I was still just a young boy myself, and my servants and I were struggling already. Taking these two in would definitely make things more difficult. But I’d just promised the girl I’d take care of them. I had already made up my mind. The only thing left was to figure out a way to explain the situation to the servants.

“Let’s get you out of here first.”

Monsters had already started to approach us from the scent of the blood. I couldn’t stand around there much longer, so I tied the kids up with “String” and flew us out of there.

“... And that’s why I’m here. I’d love some advice on what to do, old man.”

My first instinct was to bring them over to Liol’s house. He looked confused when I showed up carrying them, but he didn’t ask any questions. He quickly prepared beds for them, and didn’t open his mouth until after the kids were resting inside the house.

“Hmm... advice, you say? Before that, tell me—what do you intend to do with them?”

“I want to bring them home with me, but I’m scared of how Erina is going to respond...”

“Hahaha! You’re fine with fighting a mad old man like me, but you’re scared of a mere maid?!”

“Shut up, old man. I’m not scared, I just feel bad.”

I already knew the servants would happily accept the kids if I brought them home. It just meant that we would all struggle harder than we already had been. They were all working really hard to take care of me, so I didn’t want to put any extra strain on them.

“Well, let’s leave it at that, then. But uh, you asked for advice? I’m sorry, but I’m not really good with anything but swords.”

“I know. All I want to know is if these two are slaves.”

It was rather obvious from their condition and the collars around their necks, but I still wanted to check with Liole. He was more familiar with this world than me, after all.

“They are definitely slaves. You can tell by the collar.”

“What are these, anyways? I sense magic from them. Are they some kind of twisted mana tool?”

“Those are ‘Collars of Binding.’ They’re used by slave traders to keep their slaves in check. When they place one on their slaves, they can punish them at will by simply sending some mana into the collar. It causes intense pain for the poor things. It also sucks the mana out of the victim; so if your mana regenerates slowly, you’ll surely die from mana exhaustion.”

“Then we have to get them off, quick. I saw a keyhole on them, but I don’t have the key. Is it safe to pick the locks, or force them open?”

“I don’t know what ‘picking a lock’ means, but I wouldn’t try to force it open. If you break it or pull it off by force, the collar will kill whoever it’s attached to in the process.”

What a horrible creation. Such a well-made mana tool would surely sell for a lot, but I didn't want to risk hurting them just to keep the collars intact. Trying to break them open by hand was out, but... maybe using mana to crack them open would be fine?

"Want me to cut them with my sword? Mana tools stop working if you cut right through the core of it."

"I definitely trust your skills, but I'd like to leave that as a last resort. I want to try something first."

"Oh? What fun new thing will you show me this time?"

The old man folded his arms and watched me intently as I reached out for the collar around the boy's neck. As I touched the metal, I used one of my new spells — "Scan." It spread my mana through an object and allowed me to analyze it in my head. It was similar to an x-ray. "Search" was great for mapping large areas, while "Scan" was good for smaller objects and such.

I had to be touching the target directly to use it. But I had tested it with both objects and monsters, and even got Dii's permission to try it on him. All the tests went smoothly, and were completely safe. After scanning the collar, I found a magic circle inside. I zoomed in on that with "Scan," and analyzed its mana flow. By doing so, I soon found the centre of the magic circle.

"There we go. Now..."

I inserted a thin "String" into the keyhole, and used it to block off the centre of the magic circle. That cut off the mana flow, which would stop the spell from functioning. After I made sure the spell had been interrupted, I used "String" to destroy the centre of the magic circle completely.

"Hm? Something's happening."

"I should be able to force it off now."

I took out my mithril knife and destroyed the keyhole completely. The collar came off, and the boy was still breathing.

"All right! Next is the girl!"

"Hahaha! You keep surprising me each time I see you! Normally, people who

have their collars torn off start choking on their own blood before dying.”

“Yet you wanted to try cutting them off...?”

“I thought maybe I’d be able to cut through the core before that happened, hahaha!”

It could have worked in theory, but his casual attitude towards their lives irked me. I also wanted him to keep it down a little next to the kids so they could rest. I ignored him while I undid the girl’s collar too.

They were still in terrible condition, but at least the horrible devices were off. After their magic circles were crushed, the collars were just pieces of scrap metal. I figured they could still prove to be useful with some analysis, so I decided to keep them.

“What happens when a slave with one of these horrible things has them removed?”

“That’s proof they’re a slave. They’re never removed unless their owner wants them freed, so now they’re as free as you and me.”

“Good. Honestly, what monster made these young kids slaves...?”

Slaves were usually taken forcefully by criminals. Which meant...

“Those two were most likely abducted and forced into slavery. They look like silver wolves, after all. Those are rare around these parts.”

I had read about the Silver Wolf Clan in Albert’s Journey—they were a clan of silver wolf demi-humans who lived deep in the forest. Apparently, they were known to be very strong. While they had a tendency to be quite feral and hostile, they would defend their own kin at all costs.

“I see, so that’s why. Well, I don’t care what race they are. I would have saved them no matter what.”

“That’s very like you. So, what will you do next?”

They looked incredibly weak, so getting them something to eat once they woke up would definitely be a priority. The old man didn’t have much of a kitchen, so it would be best to take them back home first.

“I’ll take them home before they wake up. Sorry for showing up out of the blue, old man. Later!”

“I wanted to spar a bit since you’re here, but considering the circumstances, I’ll wait until next time.”

“Sorry. Here—it’s not much, but take this.”

I threw the rest of my lunch over to him, then carried the kids outside. I made sure to fasten them to my body by using “String” so they wouldn’t fall when I flew.

“That maid of yours sure is one hell of a cook.”

“She is indeed. All right. Later, old man.”

I waved to the old man before I jumped up into the sky with the kids in hand. As I started the journey home, I used “Call” to reach out to Erina.

| Noel |

My name is Noel. I’m one of Sirius’s servants.

Because he was just a child, me and the other servants were taking care of him. Well... honestly, he was such an amazing guy that he didn't need us at all. He was able to use magic by the time he was three, and he started to create his own spells shortly after. He could even beat Dii—a retired adventurer—with ease. He was smarter than any of us, and he made every day here wonderful for all of us. He was an amazing person.

He was great at cooking, too—his dishes were both delicious and unique. Mayonnaise and pudding were my favorites. The first time I’d tasted both, I’d almost cried. I had no idea something could taste so good. Just thinking about it made me want to cry again. Er, anyway, I got sidetracked.

Sirius’s mana affinity was colorless. People seemed to think that being colorless meant that you were totally useless, but that couldn’t have been further from the truth. He was such a wonderful and amazing person, yet he was standing with a

look on his face I'd never seen before. It was clouded with worry. We were in the guest room, where two demi-human children were sleeping next to us.

The strange situation had started earlier that afternoon...

After I'd finished lunch, I had been asked to clean the guest room by Erina. I thought we'd be getting a visitor. She didn't look angry, so I knew it wouldn't be him. I'd hurried over to the guest room and started to clean it when Sirius came home with our guests. I ran over to the hallway to greet him and spotted him holding two unconscious children.

"Welcome home, Siri—huh? What's going on?"

"Let's get the children to the guest room first. We'll talk then."

I'd followed Erina to the guest room and helped her tuck the kids in. Dii had showed up shortly after with medicine and wet towels, but he hadn't heard about what was going on, either. And so, after we'd treated the kids as best we could, there we were.

Sirius gathered us up and explained what had happened. He had found these two wandering around the forest by themselves, and ended up being chased by monsters. Not only had he saved them from the monster, but he had even taken them in. He was truly an incredible person, just like his mother. What these kids had been through...

"They were slaves, right?"

I could tell right away—after all, I had been a slave myself. I had been saved by the mistress before things got out of hand, but these two hadn't been that lucky. There was something strange about them, though. Dii seemed to notice it too, because he pointed to the kids' necks.

"Sirius, if they're slaves, where are their collars?"

"I broke them. I wanted to get those horrible things off them as quick as I could."

"You broke them?!"

He'd broken the collars?! I'd seen many foolish kids try that and they all died. Sirius quickly explained how he'd done it to try to calm us down. He was as

amazing as ever.

“I see. Well, let’s leave them here to rest and wait for them to wake up.”

“Thank you. I’ll go make some food for them. Noel, could you please watch the kids? They might feel safer seeing another demi-human when they wake up.”

“Of course! Leave it to me!”

I would’ve asked to watch them even if Sirius hadn’t told me to do so. I wanted to protect those kids!

“Sirius, I’ll help you cook.”

“No, Dii, you stay here with Noel. Let me know if something happens.”

“Okay.”

Sirius and Erina left the room, which meant it was completely silent. Dii rarely spoke, and I didn’t feel like talking either. I sat down in the chair next to the bed and watched over the kids.

Dii sat down a little further away and kept an eye on me. We both sat like that in silence for a while. The children were truly in terrible condition. They had whip marks, bruises from punches, and various injuries. Seeing it made me tremble as I recalled painful memories from my past. I had been lucky that my chastity hadn’t been taken during my time in slavery, but there had still been plenty of violence. Who knows what could have happened to me if the mistress hadn’t saved me... But this wasn’t the time to think about the past. I was the only one who could relate to these kids. I had to stay sharp and be there for them!

“Noel.”

Dii put a hand on my shoulder as he noticed that I was struggling a bit. He looked as emotionless as ever, but I could tell that he was very worried. I understood immediately—he was telling me not to overthink it and to relax.

“You will be fine. I’m... no, Sirius is here, after all.”

“Yeah.”

He was right. My wounds had long since healed, and I was surrounded by family. What mattered now was to care for these two; they were the ones in

need. They must have had a horrible time, but they had been saved by Sirius. He would surely be able to make them smile again, like he had done with me. It made me think he really was just like his mother. He had saved these kids, just like the mistress had saved me.

Dii made us some tea, and we sat there together in silence while we watched over the two of them.

Before long, it was dinner time, but the kids were still asleep. They were breathing, so I knew they were still alive, but they showed no signs of waking up. It worried me. I was about to tell Dii to get Sirius when there was a knock on the door.

“Hey, it’s me. I’m coming in.”

Sirius walked in, as if my thoughts had summoned him. A delicious smell filled the room as he entered with a pot. I was getting hungry, so the smell got my attention right away.

“Want some?”

“Huh? But isn’t this for them?”

“I made a little extra. There’s enough for you, too, but it probably won’t taste like much. I made it easy to eat for them.”

“Well, thank you. I’ll have a little, then.”

He saw right through me. He poured some soup into a cup and handed it over to me. The taste was faint, but it was still delicious. It had this gentle, soothing feel to it.

“Sirius, I’d love to learn the recipe one day.”

Dii looked over at the dish, excitement hiding behind his emotionless expression. This did seem perfect for someone in their condition. I’d love to learn the recipe myself.

“Ahh... uh...?”

The smell of the food seemed to wake the girl up. She faintly opened her eyes in confusion. She must have been scared, seeing so many strange faces.

“Hi, uh... are you okay?”

| Sirius |

“Hi, uh... are you okay?”

Noel leaned forward and talked nervously to the girl. She was going to be scared no matter what, but having another demi-human there to talk to would hopefully make her feel a little more at ease. The girl froze in shock for a second, then started to frantically look around. The moment she spotted her brother, she sighed in relief and patted his head.

“Yeah, he’s fine. How about you? Are you okay? Is there anything you need?”

“Ah...”

Noel talked slowly, and the girl was visibly calming down. That’s it, Noel. There you go.

“Sirius, is she mute?”

“Her throat is a little damaged right now, it seems. She’ll be fine once she’s healed.”

I had checked both of them by using “Scan” at Liole’s place. They were both dehydrated, and had various injuries that were infected. For the girl, that included her throat. Thankfully, neither of them had any life threatening injuries. I would be able to heal her throat myself just fine. It was too early for that, though. She needed to start trusting us first.

“Look, no collars. Everyone here is your friend. We’re not going to hurt you. We want to help you both.”

“Ah...?!”

The girl started to frantically touch her neck, then looked at her brother’s neck in confusion. It took her several seconds to process that the collar was gone, but once she did, tears streamed down her face as she touched her neck over and

over.

“Uh... ah...?”

“We’ve taken your collars off, so you’re both free now. Oh, are you hungry? Here’s some warm soup if you want. It’s really good!”

“Uh...”

Her ears twitched at the sight of food, but then she glanced over at her sleeping brother and shook her head.

“I see. You won’t eat until he’s awake? Okay. How about we talk while we wait, then?”

Noel gently wiped the girl’s tears with a handkerchief, and she nodded timidly. Thankfully, she had started to trust Noel already.

“I’m Noel. Could you tell me your name?”

“... I...”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Don’t push yourself. Can you write?”

Noel started to search in a panic for something to write on; she turned to me for help.

“Phew... Dii, go get Erina. Noel, introduce me to her first.”

“Okay.”

“Umm, this boy is our master, Sirius. He was the one who saved you.”

“Ye...”

She looked a little guarded when she spotted me, but she still nodded in my direction. She must have remembered me. I tried to walk a little closer, and stood next to Noel.

“I’ll introduce myself, too. My name is Sirius. Like Noel said, I’m her master. I saved you two in the forest.”

“Ah...”

“I want to learn more about you guys, but you can’t talk much like this. I’d like to heal your throat. Is it okay if I touch your neck a little bit?”

“Sirius is a really nice person. Look, he doesn’t even get mad if I do this!”

Noel ran up behind me and started to pull on my cheeks. I knew she did it to help the girl feel safe, but she was seriously going to get it later. The girl watched us for a second, then nodded slowly.

“Thank you. I’ll touch your throat a little. It might feel a little hot, but it won’t hurt. I promise.”

“Ah... kay...”

The girl nodded again and let me touch her neck. But the moment I touched her and started to focus my mana...

“Don’t touch my sister!”

The boy suddenly jumped out of bed and sank his teeth into my arm.

“Sirius?!”

“Don’t move!”

Noel jumped in surprise, but I held my other hand up to her to stop her from moving. I tried to maintain the focus of my mana with the other. The boy was clearly malnourished, so he could barely close his mouth, but his razor sharp fangs still hurt quite a lot.

“Eh... ahh...!”

“Don’t talk! You’ll slow down the healing.”

The girl tried to calm her brother down, but I shook my head to keep her quiet. The boy was confused, and just did his best to protect his sister from danger. I didn’t want to make the situation any worse, so I let him stay like that while I continued to heal the girl.

“Grrr! Let my sister go!”

“Now you’re a feisty one! I’m glad you’re awake, though.”

“S-Sirius?! You’re bleeding!”

His sharp fangs had long since broken through my skin. It really hurt, but I ignored the pain and focused on healing. I didn’t want to create a ruckus that would worry Erina, either.

“You can move your hands just fine. Could you try to calm your brother down?”

The girl nodded and started to gently pat her brother’s back.

“Sis, why aren’t you stopping him?!”

“Hng...”

“No! I don’t believe you! Let my sister go!”

He put whatever strength he had into his jaw and bit down even harder. It wasn’t surprising that he’d reacted that way, though. The rotten people who had enslaved them had surely tried tricking them in similar ways before. Luckily, I was able to finish healing the girl’s throat fairly quickly.

“There we go. Try talking now.”

“Stop making my sister push herself!”

“I’ve healed your throat. You should have no issues talking now.”

I just ignored the boy and focused on the girl, as she’d be able to calm her brother for me.

“L-Leus...”

“Sis?!”

“Leus... Leus, can you hear me?”

“Of course I can!”

“Hehe, I’m glad.”

Noel watched the two with a smile, as if forgetting about what she was supposed to be doing.

“Soup.”

“Oh! Right! I’ll get them bowls right away!”

We could just reheat it if it got cold, but I wanted them to eat it as soon as possible.

Noel poured some soup into two bowls, then held them out in front of the

kids.

“Your brother is awake now, so you can eat, right? Here you go!”

“Hmph! Don’t think we’ll fall for that! You’ll feed us something gross and laugh at us after, I know!”

“Of course not. Look! Mmm, it’s yummy!”

Leus was still wary of us, but Noel replied in a calm tone and tested the soup in front of him. She handed over the bowl.

“I know you must have been through a lot of pain, but you’re safe now. Please eat up. Our master here worked hard to make it for you.”

“Why would you save us?”

“Don’t worry about that now. Just eat. It’s really good, I promise!”

Noel kept trying to get them to eat. Luckily, the girl listened by bringing the spoon to her mouth.

“It’s delicious.”

“R-Really?! But what if it’s poisoned?!”

“It’s okay. It’s... really delicious. It’s so warm and nice... I’ve never had something this good before...”

Leus finally tried some, too, and his tough attitude was gone in an instant. Tears began to run down his cheeks.

“What? It’s so good... What is this? Damnit! Sob!”

“It’s... super delicious... Sob.”

All kinds of emotions welled up to the surface as they both started to weep. Hopefully they would calm down a little after they got it out of their systems.

“I’ll leave this to you.”

“No problem! I got this!”

I quietly left the room and left them with Noel. Dii and Erina were both waiting right outside the room. Erina instantly started to treat the bite on my arm.

“Good work, Sirius, but you shouldn’t be so reckless. If that boy had more strength in him, you could have gotten seriously hurt.”

“Sorry for worrying you.”

“Good, because you did. Now, I’ve prepared some tea. Let’s relax for a bit.”

Erina and I headed to the living room, while Dii walked over to the kitchen. We sat down and started drinking our tea, but Erina didn’t say anything. She was clearly waiting for me to start talking. I knew there was no point in stalling, so I started right away.

“Erina, I’m sorry. I brought those two home without even asking first.”

“You do not need to apologize. You’re just like your mother. If anything, it made me happy.”

“Really? I’m like Mom?”

“Yes. Remember, the mistress saved Noel from slavery.”

Erina smiled gently. I didn’t know I had acted just like my mother. I felt something strange deep down—joy, perhaps? Erina quickly resumed her serious expression, though, so I did the same.

“Sirius, what do you intend to do with them?”

“Well... I don’t know if we’ll be able to take care of them here. We’re already tight on funds, and—”

“Sirius.”

Erina cut me off and placed her hand on my shoulder.

“Don’t think about those things. Tell me exactly what you want to do, regardless of whether you think we can do it or not. We’re your servants, so we will do our utmost best to fulfill your wishes, regardless of what it takes.”

“Even if you know it will be really tough?”

“Of course. I would tell you if I felt like you were being unfair, but I would never go against your wishes—no matter what.”

Drat. She really knew me all too well. Because of her pep talk, I knew exactly what I wanted to do.

“I want to take care of them and give them a place to stay here. I want to train them and let them choose for themselves what they want to do from there.”

“They have no money, and they’re very weak. Taking care of them will surely be tough for us. But you still want to take them in?”

“Yes. I’m not just doing it to save them, but to reach my own goals, too.”

I’d wanted students to teach for a while already. In other words, I was using them to satisfy my own urge to be a teacher. I was interested in how fast I could train someone in this world with magic and all the resources I didn’t have in my old world.

“Was there a reason you picked these two? Was it just random?”

“I don’t pick just anyone as my students. I wasn’t planning on it when I’d saved them. I’d even considered leaving them there at first.”

It was when I looked into the girl’s eyes that I knew. Those eyes were filled with determination. She would protect her brother, no matter what happened to her. That was the determination I wanted to see in my students. I knew it would be tough, but that was fine. I was a child, after all. It wasn’t strange that I’d let my feelings get ahead of me. I’d felt like taking them in, so I did.

“But those two were so desperate to protect each other and live on. I took a liking to them right away when I saw that.”

“I see. I have a suggestion, then. How about we train them to be servants here with us?”

“Servants? That wasn’t what I saved them for...”

“But we can’t just house them here for free. They should do some work and earn their place, don’t you think?”

“That’s true. I’m sorry, I just started thinking about training them and nothing else.”

She was right, it wouldn’t be enough just to train them physically. Teaching them how to work would be just as valuable and important.

“Don’t worry about it, I’m glad I could help. And I’m actually being selfish, too—I have been wanting a few new promising servants to teach what I know

myself.”

“I see. But why? It’s not like I need more servants.”

“I... won’t be here forever, after all.”

“Erina...”

Erina had been growing weaker lately. Any physical labor was getting hard for her to do, so she was probably looking for a successor. It hurt me to think about that, but Erina smiled gently and shook her head.

“Don’t worry, that’s still a long ways away. I just want to prepare to make sure you’re taken care of, Sirius.”

I wasn’t sure if she was just trying to make me feel better with that, or if she meant it, but I didn’t want to say anything against her. I just nodded instead.

“Got it. You can train them... as long as they’re okay with it, of course.”

“You did save their lives, so I doubt they’ll mind.”

“That might be so, but I want them to choose for themselves, not because they feel indebted to me.”

“You really are just like your mother.”

Erina smiled again as she mentioned my mom. I felt a little embarrassed, so I looked away.

“Oh, I should go make supper. I’m sure those two will have calmed down by the time we’re done eating. I got some fresh meat today, so I’ll make some cutlets.”

“Yet another new dish? Dii will be happy to hear that.”

“I bet. I’ll have to bring some for Noel too.”

I wanted to thank her for helping out with the kids, so I decided to prepare it with her favorite ingredients. After we’d finished eating, everyone gathered together. The kids had finally calmed down enough to talk.

“What is this?! There’s mayonnaise in it! Oh my gosh, it’s sooo goood!”

“Shut up.”

I should have given Noel her food before we talked. I'd made fresh cutlets filled with mayonnaise, since I knew that Noel would love them. I definitely shouldn't have given it to her in front of the kids, though—they were staring at her enviously. Leus was literally drooling.

“You guys shouldn't have any of that.”

“Why?! She's eating, why can't we?!”

“L-Leus! I-I'm sorry for my brother!”

“Don't worry about it. Can you guys tell me what you've eaten recently?”

“Well... that soup was the first thing we've eaten in a long time. Before that, we found some edible plants in the woods...”

“That's why you can't eat that right now, sorry. Your stomachs are weak and need time to adjust. If you ate too much now, you would just throw up.”

“No I wouldn't!”

“I'm sorry, I'm sorry!”

Leus really didn't like being told what to do. It was normal for someone his age, of course, but I was surprised he'd gotten by as a slave with an attitude like that.

“I'll make it for you guys again when you're feeling better. I promise.”

“Thank you! Ah... um, I-I'm sorry.”

The girl really wanted to eat it too, it seemed. She blushed beet red and looked down in embarrassment.

“I introduced myself earlier, but let's do another round of introductions. We have some new faces here too, after all.”

“Yeah, who are you guys?”

“Heh. I'll start then. My name is Sirius, and I'm the master of this house.”

Noel, Dii, and Erina all introduced themselves after me. Noel's introduction was mainly just muffled noises, as her mouth was stuffed with food. Classic Noel.

“Um... Lord Sirius? Are you a noble?”

“I don’t know. Am I? I might be, but don’t worry about it. No need for formalities.”

“I’d feel bad! I-I’m Emilia, and this is Leus. I’m sorry for not thanking you earlier! Thank you so much for saving us! Leus, introduce yourself.”

“I’m Leus...”

Hearing that I was a noble quickly made them act very timid. Noel leaned over and whispered in my ear that slaves were trained to never go against nobles, which was probably the reason.

“I can barely hear you. What happened to your energy from earlier, Leus?”

“Shut up! Fine! I’m Leus! My dad is super strong and stuff, so I am too!”

“Don’t you think your strong father would thank me for saving his son’s life?”

“Ugh...?!”

I wasn’t trying to tease him, of course. I was starting to teach him, beginning with manners. No matter what he had been through, it was important to have basic manners. My servants clearly got what I was getting at, and didn’t interject at all.

“Th-Thank... you.”

“Good. Well, everyone has introduced themselves. Do you guys have any questions?”

“What... are you going to do with us?”

That question right away, huh? Well, I was planning on giving them two choices, but Emilia looked up at me with a sad expression before I could answer.

“Leus is all I have left... I lost everything else—our home, our parents, our money. We have nothing of value left. I wouldn’t even know what to do to pay you back...”

“If you don’t have anything, then start working and earn something. You guys can stay here while you’re healing, of course.”

“But we’re slaves, we don’t have anything...”

“No, you’re not. You don’t have collars anymore, remember? And once your wounds are fully healed, you have two options. The first one is to go to town and try to get by on your own. The second is to stay here and learn under my wing.”

“Learn...?”

“Yes. I’ll teach you everything you need to know on how to survive by yourselves later. You’ll get food and whatever else you need during that time too, of course.”

“He’s lying, Sis! All the grown-ups who say stuff like that just do mean things instead!”

It seemed like it was still hard to trust me. I might have saved their lives, but I was still a stranger. While Leus remained suspicious, I could see excitement in Emilia’s eyes.

“Aren’t you frustrated, though?”

“Wh-What...?”

“You want to protect each other, yet you were powerless against the people who wronged you, and the monsters that attacked you.”

They both frowned in anger.

“You said you have no one but your brother, right? In that case, you have nothing to lose as long as you two stay here together, right?”

“But... why would you do that for us?”

“I have no grand reason for it. I just happened to save you. Consider yourselves lucky, I guess.”

“Okay. We will follow you.”

“Sis?!”

I thought it would take them some time to decide, but the girl had already agreed.

“We have no other place to go, and he’s saying he can train us and make us stronger. I want to protect you, Leus, so I want to get stronger.”

“I-I want to protect you too! F-Fine, let’s stay here with this guy, then!”

“Don’t be so rude. He’s our master now, so be polite. He’s Lord Sirius from now on.”

“F-Fine... L-Lord Sirius...”

“I’m sorry my brother is so rude. Please let us stay here, Lord Sirius!”

Emilia grabbed her brother’s head and forced him to bow with her. I guess I didn’t really give them much of a choice, but I had finally gotten my first two students. It was a win-win situation for everyone.

“All right. I look forward to working with you two.”

“I’ll do my best!”

“Hmph, I... ugh. I-I’ll do my best.”

They had finally seemed to let their guards down. They hadn’t smiled at all yet, but hopefully I would be able to make them smile soon enough. Children should be happy, after all.

“With that out of the way... let us take it from here, Sirius.”

“Right. I’ll leave it to you guys.”

Erina would definitely be better at explaining everything about the house and such, so I left that to her. Noel was there, too, so they were in good hands.

“Before we do anything else, you two need to get cleaned up. Drink your medicine, then go make yourselves presentable.”

“Here’s the medicine.”

“And here’s some hot water and towels.”

“Huh?!”

“I’ll get you clothes next. Take their measurements, then give them some spare clothing until theirs are done.”

“Got it! Okay, done measuring!”

“Here are some clothes.”

“Huuuh?!”

Thanks to the servants' swift work, the two of them were nice and tidy in no time. By using my healing abilities, I'd be able to have them back to perfect condition in five days. The girl, Emilia, was nine years old. Her younger brother, Leus, was seven. I looked forward to seeing how fast they'd grow; that was the greatest joy for a teacher.

I started to think of a training schedule for them while I watched my servants clean them up.

Chapter 3: Servant

Adload had a few silver wolf villages spread around here and there, such as the one that Emilia and Leus had grown up in.

About a year ago, their village had been suddenly attacked by a large group of monsters. Their father, who was the elder in the village, had fought bravely, but they were quickly overrun. He was eaten right in front of Emilia. Leus had been hiding with his mother, so he had been lucky enough to not witness his father's horrible doom. Stunned by grief and despair, Emilia stood surrounded by the monsters that had just eaten her father. But as the monsters drew closer, Emilia's mother came charging in. She desperately handed Leus over to Emilia and shielded her children from the monsters with her own body. Their mother's sacrifice gave the siblings enough time to flee from the village.

Terrified, the siblings had run through the forest at random, thinking of nothing but getting away. There, they happened to run into a group of humans who were just passing by. They were not saved, however, as the humans were slave traders; their nightmare had only just begun.

They were sold into slavery, and had magic collars attached to their necks. To make matters worse, because they were rare silver wolves, they were treated extra terribly by the slave owners. They barely got any food at all, and would be beaten if they did anything the slave owners didn't like.

The reason Emilia couldn't talk when I'd found them was especially cruel—they had finally been given food for a change, but it had turned out to be poisoned. Leus had been too suspicious and scared to eat, so Emilia decided to eat it first to show him it was safe. The poison ruined her throat.

Still, the siblings did not give up. They didn't want their parents' sacrifice to be in vain. They endured everything the humans did to them. In order to stay together, they remained as obedient as they could. And then, one day, they

finally found a chance to escape.

The slave owner's carriage was attacked on the road by a group of monsters. The siblings escaped in the midst of chaos and fled into the forest because they were scared the slave owners would come after them. They ran desperately through the dense forests, trying to avoid the monsters hiding within. After fleeing for some time from the monsters, they eventually collapsed from exhaustion. Just as they'd been cornered, completely drained of their strength, I'd shown up and saved them.

"... And that about sums it up."

I was in Liole's house, explaining the siblings' story over tea. It was one of our usual training days, and we had just taken a break after a sparring session. He'd asked me about the kids, so I'd told him how I had found them and how they ended up there.

"I see. First the runts have their parents eaten, then slavery? Talk about terrible luck."

"Exactly. I've pretty much finished healing their physical wounds, but the emotional scarring runs really deep. They haven't smiled even once yet."

"Their parents were murdered right in front of them, of course they're not smiling. Trauma like that sticks with you. So, what are you planning on doing with them now?"

"First, I'll try to get to know them. Make sure they're comfortable with me."

They both wanted to get stronger. The drive was there. Once their physical injuries had healed, they could start training right away. Still, I also wanted to do something about their mental wounds.

Emilia was acting obedient, given that she felt indebted to me for having saved them, but I could tell that she was struggling deep down. She acted tough in front of her brother, but I had seen her sneak away to cry by herself many times. The terror and pain inflicted upon her by the slave owners, as well as the trauma from watching her parents die in front of her, were clearly taking a heavy toll on her. It was obvious that she needed help fast, or she would break from the horrible trauma.

Leus was acting like any other cheeky kid his age, but he was just putting on a tough front. He was also scared, and probably wanted to just lie down and cry. Regardless, his wish to protect his only remaining family was clearly stronger—hence the tough act.

Erina had seen through his act, and he'd apparently broke down in her arms after she spent some time caring for him alone. I'm sure Erina's motherly love helped get through to him, but he was just a kid. It was bound to happen at some point. He still kept revolting against me specifically. Maybe seeing his beloved sister—and Erina, who he now trusted—both speak so highly of me got on his nerves.

Regardless of the reason, I hadn't fully gained their trust yet.

"They're kids. I want to see them smile more."

"Give them a sword, then. I always smile when I swing my partner over here!"

"You do, but that's because you're crazy, old man."

"Hahaha! Well, whose fault is that?! You're the one enabling me!"

I couldn't deny that, which annoyed me. Recently, I had been coming to fight him nearly every day, which had definitely made the battle-crazed old man even more obsessed.

"Just you wait. I'll train those two into worthy opponents for you, old man."

"Hah! I look forward to it. Oh, if you're going to teach them to fight, bring them here. If they seem worth my time, I'll teach them a thing or two."

"That might not be a bad idea. Or it might be a terrible idea. I'm not sure yet. I'll think about it. See you later old man."

"I wanted to go for one more round, but oh well."

We were still fighting with the same rules—the first hit wins. I had continued to win most of our fights, though he kept getting stronger each time we fought. I couldn't let my guard down for even a second against him now. He was truly a formidable opponent. Even when I used various techniques I knew from my old life that he'd never seen before, he'd adapt in an instant, as if he'd seen it a million times before.

I barely managed to win today, but I'd come close to losing several times myself. It felt great having a worthy opponent to fight for once. The old man did beat me once in a while, but he was seriously a battle-crazed fool—he actually seemed more excited when he lost. He was a stubborn one, too. He'd never lose on purpose, that was for sure.

I left Liole's house, killed a couple of monsters for food, then headed back home. It was already dark by the time I got back. Emilia and Noel were cleaning the hallway as I landed outside and walked in. Noel bowed and greeted me like usual, but Emilia stood frozen in shock for a second.

"Welcome home, Sirius. Emilia, dear, aren't you going to greet him?"

"Ah... y-yes! Welcome home, Sirius!"

"I'm back. What's wrong, Emilia? You look pale."

"Of course she's surprised—she's never seen your magic before."

So that was why. I had never actually shown the siblings that I could fly.

"Was that... magic?"

"That's right. You'll tire yourself out if you keep getting surprised by stuff like this. You should just accept that he's weirdly amazing at everything and move on."

"Okay, got it, Noel!"

"H-Hey! Wrong!"

Noel suddenly stopped cleaning and pointed at Emilia like she'd done something wrong. I hadn't noticed her mess up or anything of the sort. Maybe it was a detail only a professional could pick up on? Was Noel really improving that much?

"O-Oh! Umm, I got it, Big sis!"

"That's right! Good girl! You should always call me big si—ouch!"

I sentenced Noel to a firm cheek pinch that I'd dubbed the "Iron Claw." It was one of the ways I would punish her.

"Ouuuch! My face is going to stretch! Hold back a little, at least!"

“I guess it’s fine if she’s okay with it, but shouldn’t you be teaching her how to speak formally to her elders, or something?”

I’d suddenly realized I probably shouldn’t have scolded Noel in front of Emilia like that, but it was too late.

“It’s fine, she’s okay with it. Right, Emilia?”

“Y-Yes! I don’t mind.”

She was clearly bewildered, but I was happy as long as the two got along.

“All right. Anyways, I’ll be making a new dish today.”

“Ohhh? Now that’s what I like to hear! What’s it called?”

“It’s called tofu burgers. I’ll mix ground beef and tofu together to make a patty out of it.”

“I see! I didn’t understand much of that, but I see!”

“Try to at least understand the words I’ve taught you before...”

I could feel Emilia’s stare from the side as Noel and I talked, so I looked over at her.

“Anything wrong?”

“Uh...? No! Nothing...”

“I’ll make lots, so make sure you eat up, okay?”

“O-Okay!”

She was fit enough to work, but she always froze up when we started chatting. I needed to do something, and soon.

“Phew, I’m sooo full! Yet another tasty new culinary experience.”

After dinner, the servants all happily patted their bellies.

“It was quite tasty, and much easier to eat than regular meat.”

“Interesting consistency. I’ll try making it next time.”

While the servants all complimented the food, the siblings just sat there in silence after they’d finished. They did eat a lot, and had clearly enjoyed it, but

they hadn't said a word since they'd sat down. Erina obviously wanted them to at least say "thank you," so she called out to them.

"What did you think, you two? You both had two servings, so I assume it was to your liking?"

"Um... yes..."

"I-I think so..."

"Then say it out loud. Don't think about being polite towards your master. Saying thank you for the food to whoever made it is basic manners."

"Okay. It was delicious. Thank you, Sirius."

"Ugh... it was... delicious..."

Emilia looked as expressionless as before. Leus looked annoyed, like he'd lost something in saying it. But all that mattered was that they said it in the first place. I didn't mind their expressions in the slightest. Erina was doing a good job teaching them manners, but it was clear that Emilia's mental state was only getting worse. Her eyes looked dead, like she wasn't really present at all. I had to do something before it was too late.

After dinner, Emilia came over to help with the dishes. I called out to her.

"Emilia. Please come to my room after this."

"O-Okay..."

"S-Stop it! Don't do anything to my sis!"

"You'll come study with me, Leus."

"Wait! Erina! My sister is... she's... ahh?!"

Erina grabbed Leus and dragged him out of the room, clearly aware of what I was trying to do.

Once we couldn't hear Leus anymore, I turned to Dii and Noel.

"Please leave us alone for a bit, you two."

"Very well."

They replied in unison and headed out of the room. When Noel had reached

the door, she quickly turned back and smiled impishly.

“Hey Sirius, be gentle with her.”

“Of course.”

“You suuure? Make sure you start with kissing before yo—ouch, ouch, not the faaace!”

I punished Noel with another “Iron Claw,” then brought Emilia to my room and told her to undress.

Emilia was left in her underwear, and she blushed while avoiding my eyes.

“Now lie down on the bed, please.”

“Okay.”

This would surely look very shady if anyone was watching us, but I was simply healing the scars left over from her time as a slave. Her body was still covered in them, so I was using my healing ability to cure them. The reason my skills could thoroughly heal injuries and remove scars was fairly simple—when tissue is damaged, new cells normally rush to close the wound. What I was doing was dismantling the mana around the wound or scar, then creating new cells identical to the ones currently present in that part of the body. The only reason I was able to do that was because of my medical knowledge from my previous life, and my familiarity with human anatomy. Regular healing magic was surely much easier and more efficient, but I couldn’t use that very well because of my affinity. What mattered was that I was able to heal her, though. The method didn’t matter.

“I’ll do your stomach today. I’m going to touch you, okay?”

“Okay. Please.”

I had finished healing her arms, legs, and any part that was normally visible. Now the only remaining parts were those normally hidden by her clothes. I had pretty much finished healing Leus; but since Emilia was a girl and all, I wanted to be as gentle as I could. She was blushing and trembling with each movement of my hand, clearly doing her best to endure it. I continued to slowly move my hands across her stomach until all the marks had vanished.

“There we go. Your skin is nice and pretty again. What do you think?”

“Thank you... very much...”

“I’ll do your back next. Please turn over.”

She did as she was told, revealing her heavily scarred back. Obviously, she would turn away in fear when her owners came to hurt her, which was why her back was the worst off. I let out a sigh as I looked at her horrible condition. How could someone do this to a child? I put aside the rage that was welling up within me for the time being, and continued to heal Emilia.

“Have you gotten used to living here yet? I bet it’s tiring dealing with Noel all the time, huh? She’s pretty hyper.”

“I’m used to being here now, yes... I think Noe—um, big sis Noel? She’s very nice.”

She stopped and corrected herself halfway. Noel was probably being a little overbearing.

“Don’t hesitate to tell me if there’s anything wrong, or anything you need. I can’t get you anything too fancy, but I’ll do my best.”

“I-I’m fine. I’m totally satisfied with how things are.”

“Really?”

“Yes. Not only did you save our lives, but you’re even giving us warm food, and beds to sleep in. That’s all we need.”

Her face was still completely emotionless. What she was saying and her expression weren’t in line at all.

“You don’t have to lie to me, Emilia. I know you’re doing your best to keep your emotions in check.”

“Wh-What do you mean...?”

“I’ve seen you crying by yourself many times. Could you tell me what’s wrong?”

Emilia didn’t reply and just looked away. I could tell she wasn’t ready to talk just yet. While I was trying to think of another way to get her to open up to me, I moved my hands up toward an unusual-looking scar on her shoulder. It didn’t look like a whip mark or a bruise, but more like a bite.

“What happened here?”

“No, stop it!”

The moment I touched her shoulder, Emilia jumped up and ran away. She cowered in the corner of the room, desperately clinging to her shoulder.

It obviously upset her a lot, so I gently raised my arms in the air as to show her I didn't mean any harm. I called out to her in a soft whisper.

“I'm not going to do anything. I'll stay right here, okay? Do you want to tell me what that wound is from?”

“Don't... don't...”

“Don't? Don't heal it, is that what you mean?”

She was breathing heavily, and wasn't able to speak properly, but nodded in response.

I stood there in silence and watched her for a bit as I waited for her to calm down. Typically, I would have called Noel to come help calm Emilia down, but I didn't feel like it would help in this case. Instead, I decided to try pushing a bit further.

“Hey, Emilia? Could you tell me who did that to you?”

“Mom.”

“I see. Why did your mom bite you?”

“We have a custom... when you love someone, you bite them...”

Something similar to the way dogs play bite, maybe? My dog in my old life did that a lot.

“Biting someone's shoulder is... proof of your love for them. Mom bit me, and... jumped into the horde of monsters... and... and...”

Thinking about her mother finally broke her down.

“Why?! Mom, Dad, why?! Why did you leave us?! You told me you loved me! If you loved me, then why won't you come back?! I can't take care of Leus by myself! I don't want to be a big sister! I don't want to be a family without you! Why did I have to get beaten?! Why did I have to go through so much pain?! I

hate this! I... I don't want any more pain!"

Emilia hugged her knees and balled herself up in the corner as she cried heavily. She had been trying to act strong in front of her brother, but she had clearly been close to her breaking point for a while. She had finally let her emotions through.

"Emilia."

"No...!"

"Listen, Emilia."

I slowly walked toward her and knelt down so I could look her in the eyes.

"Was your mother strong like your father? Was she a fighter?"

Emilia shook her head.

"And yet she jumped in to fight the monsters all by herself. Why do you think that is?"

"I don't know..."

I hadn't seen it happen, but it was clear to me why her mother did what she did.

"She did it to protect you. I know this will be hard and sad, but please—remember what expression she was making when it happened."

"She was smiling."

"That's how much she loved you. Giving her own life didn't scare her at all if it meant saving you. And that's why she bit you that hard, too—to prove how much she cared for you."

"Mom..."

"What was the last thing she said to you?"

"Be strong and live. I love you."

"Well, then, you have to keep that promise. Be strong, live, and protect your brother."

"Yes. I'll protect Leus."

“Good. Grow stronger, so you can protect him, and live comfortably. I’ll help you.”

“Ugh... Sob, sob.”

Emilia threw herself in my arms and started to sob uncontrollably into my chest. I gently patted her hair. When I first found her, it had been practically brown from all the caked-on dirt. Now, it was back to a beautiful silver.

“I know, you must have been through so much pain. But no one here is going to hurt you. No one will get mad when you cry. You’re safe here.”

“Okay... okay...”

“Keep eating lots, get plenty of sleep, and get stronger. Make your resolve as strong as your mother’s.”

“Yeah... I will.”

“Say whatever’s on your mind. If something happens, come tell me right away.”

“Okay...”

“One day you’ll find out what you want to do in life, and I’ll help you achieve it.”

“Yeah!”

She hugged me even tighter while still crying into my chest.

After she’d gotten it all out of her system, Emilia fell asleep. My clothes were covered in her tears and snot, but seeing her cute face as she slept made it all worth it. I cleaned up her face, then laid her down to sleep in my bed. She definitely didn’t want Leus to see her like that, so I kept her in my room for the night. I quietly left the room, only to be greeted by my servants waiting outside the door. They had probably come to see what was wrong after hearing all that crying. Erina handed over a fresh set of pyjamas, then bowed her head and smiled.

“Good work, Sirius. Now all of her pent up anxiety and stress should be gone. You did well.”

“Yeah, I’m glad it worked.”

There was always a chance her fragile heart wouldn't be able to bear it any more, and that she'd lose herself completely. The fact that she'd endured it all showed how strong she really was.

Maybe she'd even smile tomorrow? Thinking about the possibility filled me with joyous anticipation. I couldn't help but smile at the thought. Suddenly, I noticed Noel watching me.

"You're a real lady killer, huh, Sirius? I'm sure Emilia will be all over you tomorrow!"

"I was treating her more like a parent would. I wasn't consoling her with any ulterior motives."

"That doesn't matter. Any girl would fall for the guy who consoled them like that!"

"Well, in that case, she'll forget about those feelings soon enough. Once she starts going through my training program, she'll learn to hate me."

"You're going to do that to her...?! Will you at least hold back? Ugh, doesn't look like it."

Noel must have recalled our training sessions, because she went completely pale.

"How are things going with Leus?"

"He had his fair share of troubles to get off his chest, yet not to the same extent as Emilia. He's sound asleep now."

"Thank you, Erina. I should be the one handling the both of them, I know..."

"I think I'm more suited to help that boy. Besides, he wants to be doted on so badly. It's quite cute."

"True. You're very suited for a motherly role. I've felt like you're my mom many times myself, after all."

"Oh?! Th-Thank you very much..."

Erina smiled from ear to ear, then bowed deeply. Was that really something that warranted a thank you? Well, she looked happy, and that's all that mattered.

“Well, now that Emilia has been taken care of... uh, where should I sleep—”

“Use my bed, please!”

Before I could even finish the sentence, Erina cut in.

She spoke up so quickly that even Noel and Dii looked over at her in surprise.

“It’s alright, I can just use the sofa in the living room. If you could get me a blanket, I’ll be fine.”

“I can’t let my master sleep on a couch while I sleep in a bed! I insist, use my bed!”

“I wouldn’t want to bother you, Erina.”

I could tell that she’d been pretty tired lately. I didn’t want to make things any worse. I looked over at the other two, who quickly looked away. Not only that, but a certain cat-eared troublemaker started to whistle awkwardly. She couldn’t even do it right, and barely made any sound.

“... My room is very plain.”

“Oh, I’ll go sleep with Emilia tonight! I don’t want her waking up all alone, you know?”

“So I can use your bed then, Noel?”

“Uh, well... my tail has been shedding a lot lately, so my bed is a complete mess. Fur everywhere, you know?”

They were clearly doing their best to come up with terrible excuses. There was no point in trying to wriggle my way out of it anymore.

“Hey, Erina, let’s sleep together tonight.”

“Of course! I’ll prepare my room at once!”

Erina smiled brightly, then rushed off to her room.

“It’s still a little early, but I’ll go to bed too. I’ll borrow yours, Sirius!”

“Yeah, whatever... I don’t have the energy for this.”

Knowing Erina, she’d probably finish really quickly. I let out a yawn, stretched, and headed toward Erina’s room. Sure enough, the bed was already prepared.

I lay down, and Erina came to join me shortly after. As I lay there, thoughts about the siblings filled my mind. No matter what, I wanted to make sure they didn't regret becoming my students. I'd do my very best to take care of them until the day we would end up parting.

I decided to go to sleep, but I couldn't calm down for some reason. I turned over and quickly found the culprit—Erina was watching me with a big smile on her face.

“Umm... I can't really sleep when you're staring so much.”

“I'm terribly sorry, but I can't sleep unless I'm on my side like this.”

“Don't lie.”

It bothered me, but as long as Erina was happy...

After a while, I managed to fall asleep despite the intent stare I could still feel on the back of my neck.

My day started early in the morning, like usual. I slipped out of bed quietly so as to not wake Erina, then changed into my exercising outfit which I had prepared in the living room. I had plenty of water, then headed outside to start warming up. I started by running back and forth in the backyard, and made sure to be as quiet as possible to avoid waking the people in the house. Then, after warming up, I used “Boost” and rushed into the forest.

Using the trees as an obstacle course, I quickly ran through the forest, past the lake, and over a group of goblins, as I headed toward the tallest mountain in the area. Once there, I canceled “Boost” and started to do more exercises at the peak of the mountain. The thin air there meant the strain from training was much higher, but the result was also much greater than normal. In my old world, this had been called high altitude training. It was one of the ways I'd train in my old life. Actually, it was more like I'd been forced into it. My master forced me up a mountain that was five thousand meters tall. I genuinely thought I would die from that.

After about an hour on the mountain, I called it a day and flew back down. Once I got home, I did a few more light exercises to cool down. That was my usual morning routine. It was only possible thanks to my magic, of course.

Without it, the trip to the mountain itself would take at least half a day.

Once I finished my training, Erina would usually be waiting there for me with a towel. But, for some reason, she wasn't there today. I tilted my head in confusion as a voice called out to me from behind.

"G-Good morning, Sirius."

I turned around and spotted Emilia. She was holding a cup of water and a clean towel. Although she looked really nervous, I could tell from her eyes that her usual gloom was gone.

"Morning Emilia! Can I have that?"

"Y-Yes! Here you go!"

She watched me wipe my sweat off for a bit, then bowed deeply.

"Sirius, thank you so much for yesterday!"

"How are you feeling?"

"I... still feel sad about Mom and Dad. But other than that, I'm fine now."

She looked a little embarrassed, though I could tell by the way she spoke that she was much more present now than before.

"Sirius! I want to get strong, like my parents were. So please, help me get stronger!"

"I'll just say it now, but some of my training methods are really tough. It might even remind you of your days in slavery. Are you okay with that?"

"Yes! I'll do my best!"

"I see. Good girl. You're plenty strong already. Your parents are watching you proudly from the other side, I'm sure."

"Ah..."

I reached down and patted her head. She tensed up for a second, but then...

"Hehe!"

She smiled for the first time since I found her.



Her smile was adorable, like a young girl's should be. I looked down and spotted her tail wagging back and forth like crazy. Curious as to what would happen, I stopped patting her.

“Ah...”

She looked sad, and her tail stopped moving at once. It was just like seeing my old dog, and I got a little carried away as I continued to pat her head for a while. Once I'd finally stopped, Emilia faintly opened her eyes and placed her hands in front of her chest while breathing heavily.

“Sirius...”

It made me remember what Noel had said the night before.

“You're a real lady killer, huh, Sirius? I'm sure Emilia will be all over you tomorrow!”

I needed a second to sort this out.

I had comforted her, but my intentions had been closer to that of a father than that of a man interested in anything else. Not only that, but I had saved another girl in my old life similar to Emilia. I had taken her under my wing in the same way. She had ended up calling me dad, and really did see me as a father from then on.

So... did Emilia see me as a father, too?

In my old life, I had been in my late 50s when I'd saved a seven year old girl, but now I was in the body of an eight year old. Emilia was nine. Oh no, I'd forgotten! I still looked like a child! She'd never think I'm her father! In her eyes, someone her own age had hugged her and comforted her when she had been at her most vulnerable. When I looked at Emilia's eyes once again, I thought maybe it wasn't impossible after all.

I needed to stop getting ahead of myself. It wasn't like she had professed her

love for me, or anything. It was too soon to determine whether or not she had fallen for me. Hopefully, she just saw me as someone to rely on and nothing more. Regardless, the most important thing was that I had gained her trust. Emilia would surely put her past behind her and work hard to get stronger. I'd be there to help her, and that was what mattered.

"I'm sure breakfast will be done any second. Go inside, Emilia."

"Okay, Sirius!"

Emilia ran off with her tail still wagging.

I went back inside and finished changing. Soon, I spotted Noel watching me with an impish smile, like a kid that had just finished pranking their friend. It irked me, so I decided to punish her a little.

"Meeow?! E-Emilia is happy, isn't that what matters?!"

I knew it—she had a hand to play in this.

I was wrestling with the meowing Noel, pushing her down on the ground to punish her further, when Dii finished making breakfast and called us to the kitchen. We were having French toast.

Erina was eating elegantly as per usual, while Dii nodded proudly to himself. The siblings were both stuffing their faces with toast, and even Noel suddenly jumped to her feet like nothing had happened.

When he saw the siblings eat his cooking so zealously, Dii called out to them with a smile.

"Taste good?"

"Yes! I've never had something this delicious before!"

"It's super sweet and tasty! You're amazing, big bro Dii!"

"Sirius taught me the recipe."

"Huh?!"

The siblings gasped in surprise, though their expressions were widely different.

The sister was gazing at me with excitement, her eyes sparkling, while her brother looked annoyed.

“In fact, most of what Dii cooks was learned from Sirius.”

“He knows lots of recipes I’ve never heard of.”

“Wow! You’re amazing, Sirius!”

“H-Hmph! It’s not that tasty!”

He just said it was good, but indirectly complimenting me really didn’t sit well with him. I thought maybe I needed to have a talk with him, but Noel cut in before I had time to say anything.

“Hey, Leus! You can’t say stuff like that!”

He clearly hadn’t expected Noel to get upset, because he sat there stunned for a second.

“When something is delicious, you should say so. Here, try some with honey!”

“It’s good.”

“Right? Without Sirius, you’d never be able to eat this, so you’d better apologize!”

“I’m sorry.”

“Good boy! Although it pains me to do so, I’ll reward you with some of my toast too!”

Who was this, and what had she done with the real Noel?

Erina noticed my surprise, and explained,

“She is quite the airhead when it comes to most things, but she’s very good with children. Especially so with these two, since they have similar pasts. She sees them like family already.”

Speaking of—other than me, Noel had been the youngest this whole time. Since I’d been acting like an adult since I’d been born, this was the first time I’d seen her really deal with someone younger than her. It made me see her in a slightly different light.

“Um, big sis Noel, you don’t have to share if you’re that sad about it…”

“No! I have to! I’m the big sister here, it’s my duty!”

“Should I cook more?”

“YES PLEASE!”

Never mind. Same light as always.

After we'd finished breakfast, I had the siblings change into something light and meet me in the backyard. They were still fairly thin, though they had started putting on weight quickly after they were able to eat plenty of food every day. They looked a little nervous, but they still stood firmly in front of me.

“We'll start with your stamina. Do a few laps in the yard for me.”

The backyard was quite big, so it made for a decent workout by itself.

“That's easy!”

“How many rounds should we do?”

“Keep going until you can't stand any more.”

“Huh?!”

“You heard me! Start running, and don't stop until you collapse! Push yourselves! Don't worry, we're here to care for you if you pass out.”

As if on queue, Noel approached with towels in hand and started to wave like a maniac.

“Hi! Nurse Noel reporting for duty!”

She had learned that from me. I ignored Noel and looked back at the siblings. Stamina was both the most basic and the most important thing to train. My old master had been just as harsh with me about it.

“I'll have you go into a full dash from time to time too, so be ready for that! I'll be running with you, so don't worry.”

“D-Don't be stupid! How can you start by telling us to run until we collapse?!”

“Come on. Let's start, Leus.”

“Sis?!”

Leus froze up in surprise, but Emilia just started to run.

“I’m going to follow Sirius. I’ll run even if you don’t, Leus.”

“F-Fine! I’ll run too! But I won’t accept that guy!”

“Don’t talk about your master that way! Be more polite!”

“Tch! Damn master!”

Leus started to sprint right away, and Emilia smiled wryly before running after him. They were obviously pushing themselves too fast from the start, but they were in it together, so I let them. After an hour of running, both of them collapsed.

“How many laps was that?”

“Haah, haah, ahh...”

“Ugh...”

Noel walked over and handed them some water as she nodded to herself.

“I get you guys—I’ve been through this, too. Don’t worry, you did great. It’s just Sirius who’s a maniac.”

Noel talked to the siblings about her experience training with me, even though it had only been three days before she’d quit. Regardless, I continued to run while I waited for them to get some strength back.

“Sirius, they’re fine now.”

After a little while, Noel called out to me. I did one final sprint around the yard before I headed to Emilia and Leus.

“How did it feel to test out your body’s limit? It’s okay, you don’t have to respond. Don’t push yourselves.”

Emilia was covered in sweat, and her hair clung to her skin. She barely managed to look up at me. Meanwhile, Leus lay motionless on the ground and looked as pale as a ghost. If I didn’t know any better, I’d say he was dead. I could see his chest rising and dropping from breathing, though, so I knew he was fine.

“Rest while you can, you two. Once you get some energy back, we’ll keep running until lunch.”

Both of the exhausted siblings began to tremble. They probably wanted to

complain, but didn't seem to have the energy to do so.

"Umm, Sirius, aren't you being a bit tough on them?"

"What do you mean? I'm letting them rest, aren't I? Don't worry, people are tougher than you think."

"I'm sorry for being such a useless big sister."

While it didn't look like it, I was actually holding back on them a little. My master wouldn't even give me short breaks to rest. If I started slacking, he'd start shooting me with rubber bullets. In other words, I was pretty much forced to learn how to gather my strength just enough whenever I did get to rest, regardless of how short it was.

Anyway, I had gotten a good grasp of the siblings' limits now. Now I just had to keep giving them both painfully hard work and plentiful rest to make sure they didn't break. Hard work should be rewarded, though. I had the stick, now I needed the carrot.

What kind of carrot would be good for them? The only thing I could think of was to make a delicious meal for them.

"Is there something you guys want for lunch?"

"I want that cutlet sandwich stuff you made me before!"

"Me too... please!"

"M-Me too...!"

Maybe that was the perfect reward, after all; a certain cat enthusiastically joined in, too. Were all demi-humans food freaks?

After I let them rest for a while longer, I got them to their feet and had them run again. This time, I didn't plan to wait for them to collapse. I kept pushing them, though. Even when their running had turned to a sluggish walk, I still had them go. Don't stop moving, no matter what. They looked thoroughly worn out, but didn't complain at all. I was pretty impressed. I was expecting Leus to complain, like usual, but he actually kept quiet and followed his sister the whole time.

Finally, it was lunch time. I nodded in satisfaction as I watched the two

siblings fall to the ground from exhaustion.

“Thanks for the food!”

I was expecting them to lose their appetite from all that running, but they both stuffed their faces with sandwiches. It was good to see their stomachs had adjusted to eating on a regular basis. No matter what, getting enough food was extremely important.

I left the dishes to Erina and the others and handed the siblings a drink I had made.

“Um, what is this? The color is really weird...”

It was a green liquid with various other colors—like white and red—spread throughout it. It probably looked very fishy, so I got why Emilia looked concerned about it.

“This has all the nutrients you didn’t get from the food, so drink up.”

“Nutrient? What is that?! As if I’d drink that thing!”

“Just drink!”

I had made the drink by extracting the juices out of various vegetables and fruits. I added honey, too, so hopefully the taste wasn’t too bad.

They drank it. While they obviously didn't like the taste, they finished it all. As a reward, I gave them some pudding.

“Yaay!”

The cat snuck in between them yet again, but I just let her have her way.

After dessert, I gave the siblings their next assignment.

“Now, go nap.”

“Nap?”

They both tilted their heads in surprise. It was obvious they hadn’t expected the man who had just made them run until they’d nearly passed out to be so kind.

“Yes, nap. When you wake up, you’ll go study with Erina.”

I wanted to train them, but I couldn't neglect their general studying, either. That's why I had Erina teach them too. The reason I told them to take a nap first was to make sure they were refreshed for studying. I wanted to make sure they actually got some benefit from it.

"Here, sleep on the couch."

Sleeping right after a meal might not have been a good idea diet wise, but that just made it even better for the two thin siblings—they had to put on some fat before they could build muscle.

"Sleep now? Just like that?"

"It's important to rest when you can. I'll sit with you, so please go to sleep next to me."

They did as I said by lying down on the couch.

"What's wrong, Leus? Not going to sleep?"

"I can't fall asleep just like that; I already told you!"

"All right. Here, look at my finger—I'll help you. Look closely at my finger, and you'll grow sleepy."

I started to move my finger back and forth in front of his eyes, and saw his eyelids slowly start to close.

"When I snap my fingers, you're going to fall asleep. Three, two, one..."

And sure enough, as I snapped my fingers, Leus fell right asleep.

It was a pretty simple suggestion technique, and it worked well on young children—especially tired ones.

Emilia was still looking up at me like there was something she wanted before she slept.

"What's wrong? Can't sleep? You're not going to get any rest if you just stare at me all day."

"Umm... can you pat my head? Please."

"Oh, all right."

“Hehe.”

I started to pat her head. Emilia flashed a radiant smile, then closed her eyes. After just a few seconds, she seemed to have fallen asleep, too.

“You sure got them to sleep fast. You’ve got magic hands, I tell you.”

“They were exhausted. All they needed to do was relax and they fell asleep right away.”

I placed my hand on their heads and started to gently funnel some of my mana into them; this was to help their bodies recover faster. I was careful to make sure I didn’t wake them.

After a while, Erina walked over with some tea.

“Good work. It will be my turn once they wake up, right?”

“Yes, thank you. I was pretty tough on them earlier, so try to be gentle.”

“Leave it to me. I’ll shape them into perfect servants in no time.”

“You don’t have to go that far. Just teach them a little...”

“Being a servant is a position to be proud of. At this rate, I’d think they’ll become servants here soon enough. Don’t you agree?”

Noel nodded along with Erina as she looked down at the sleeping siblings.

“Emilia especially. I’ve heard her say she wants to be of use to you countless times already.”

“Hey, Noel. This girl is just looking up to me, okay? She’s not in love with me, or anything. And even that might go away soon enough once she’s been through more of my training.”

I planned on having them do mock battles, magic training, and obstacle courses.

“You underestimate the power of a young girl’s heart, Sirius! Love won’t yield, no matter what!”

“You’ve been reading too many romance novels. Anyways, I’m more worried about Leus.”

“Indeed. He has shared some of his troubles with me, but he’s still pretty unstable.”

Erina nodded in agreement; but, for some reason, Noel tilted her head instead.

“Unstable? I think he’s doing fine.”

“Listen, Noel—these two have nothing but each other left. Nothing at all. Even if they seem fine, it wouldn’t take much to change that.”

“Well, of course. They love each other!”

“It’s more complicated than that. Right now, Emilia is everything Leus has. If she were to leave, he’d chase after her. If something were to happen to her, his mind would utterly collapse. That’s what makes him unstable for the time being.”

“Emilia is doing her best to find a new purpose in life, but Leus is still just chasing after his sister.”

No doubt the reason he had been lashing out at me so much was because of jealousy. He hated seeing anyone else—especially another guy such as myself—getting close to his beloved sister.

“He might seem fine now, but once he grows up, and Emilia wants to go her own way, he’ll be lost. He needs to find his own path before then. If not...”

“Yeah. We have to find something for him, and soon.”

We only had two years left at the house before we were to be kicked out. I was going to school after that, but we had to figure out what to do with the siblings once that happened.

Noel watched as Erina and I were deep in thought, then burst out laughing.

“Haha, you two sound like parents!”

“At my age? Shouldn’t I at least be their big brother or something?”

“In that case, I’d be your mother, Sirius. How wonderful...”

I had to smile as I watched Erina close her eyes. She was probably fantasizing about that scenario. After about an hour, I decided to wake the siblings up.

“That’s weird, my body doesn’t hurt.”

“Same here. I feel really light.”

“I’ll tell you how I did that sometime. For now, study.”

The two of them got up and looked at their own bodies in confusion, while I pointed over to Erina to have her start the class.

“Let us start with learning how to be a good servant. Specifically, mannerism.”

“Okay, Ms. Erina!”

“Sure...”

“Leus, I’m your teacher right now. Address me more respectfully.”

“Ugh... O-Okay, Ms. Erina!”

She’s good. Erina was the most gentle and kindest person I knew. When it came to teaching, though, she got really strict, and Leus instantly did as he was told.

“The most important trait for a servant who remains at their master’s side is devotion. You’ll understand one day when you meet a master you want to serve yourselves.”

“I see!”

“Ugh...”

They reacted very differently to the word “master.” While Emilia nodded along excitedly, Leus looked annoyed at the idea. Erina acted quickly, though.

“Leus. Even if you don’t agree with something, that’s no proper way to act. At least say you disagree or don’t understand respectfully.”

“But I never said I wanted to be a servant... Um, so I don’t understand what you mean.”

“That’s better. Well, when I say ‘master,’ it doesn’t have to be Sirius, of course. And there’s no one telling you that you must become a servant, either. Regardless, I want you to learn. You definitely need to work on your manners.”

Leus didn’t seem totally convinced, but Erina continued.

“Especially the way you talk. It’s very important if you want to make a good

impression to know how to speak politely. Leus, do you remember how the people who treated you poorly spoke to you?”

“I don’t remember much, but... they were really rude and gross...”

“That’s because they were likely uneducated people who’d never been taught how to act by anyone. Do you want to end up like them?”

That probably made Leus remember some of what happened during his time as a slave, as he looked really uncomfortable. He shook his head silently.

“Then study. Take it seriously, but don’t rush. Just go at your own pace and learn.”

“Okay, Ms. Erina!”

“There you go. Good boy.”

She instantly returned to her usual, kind self when she complimented her students. She patted his head, which made Leus smile blissfully.

“Working on the way you speak is essential. But let me show you some other important points that any servant should know.”

Erina got up and started showing various mannerisms that were important for servants.

I saw her work on a daily basis, but I was still amazed at her elegance. She walked primly, without making a sound; she bowed flawlessly and carried cups of water without spilling a drop.

The siblings both watched Erina in awe, clearly amazed by her professionalism.

Emilia looked like she had found her calling, while Leus looked impressed.

“Those are the basics. Let’s have you try.”

“Okay!”

They excitedly got up and tried to copy Erina. Of course, they failed terribly—their footsteps were too loud, and their bowing was totally off. Erina patiently limited herself to pointing out the things they could improve on, and used herself as an example when needed.

I felt like I could help with the walking part, so I decided to join in. My ability to completely silence my footsteps impressed them, though I kept out the part about it being something I learned for assassinations instead of cleaning.

Erina's class continued until they had mastered the general idea of a servant's mannerism.

"That's enough for today. Let's continue to work hard every day—that way, you'll master this in no time."

"Thank you, teacher!"

Their class with Erina was over, but they still had more lined up. I was about to suggest taking a short break first, but Noel beat me to it.

"Good work, you two! Here're some sweets. Let's eat and relax for a bit!"

She had made some cakes that I had taught her how to bake. The kids stared at them like starved animals, but they still behaved themselves. They didn't touch their plates until Erina and I had sat down with them.

I thanked Noel and sipped my tea. Erina also took a sip of her tea, then looked at the siblings and spoke up.

"I'll have to teach you how to make tea one day, too. Oh, Sirius, do you mind if I teach them how to make your blend?"

"You don't need my permission for that."

"No, I do. Your tea is truly much tastier than any I've had before. Teaching someone else such a wonderful recipe definitely calls for the permission of whoever it was learned from."

"Is Sirius that good at making tea?"

Emilia looked over at us while her ears twitched in excitement.

"He is indeed. I was pretty confident in my own tea-making skills, but he is miles ahead of me."

"You really are good at just about everything, Sirius. You even do stuff I've never taught you better than me. Where did you learn that stuff?"

"I just know how to do it from observing, I guess."

“Huh?!”

Noel and Leus both looked over at me with a mixture of envy and suspicion.

“Then do the stuff Erina just showed us. Erina, grade him please.”

“What an honor.”

I did what they asked and showed them everything Erina had just taught the kids. I had learned all sorts of manners from watching Erina, and knew just how to do it now. I was good at being quiet and subtle in my old life, so it was fairly easy to apply it to manners instead of combat. The ability to imitate someone was a pretty basic skill that came in handy in fighting, after all. In the end, though, it was just an imitation—I wasn’t nearly as skilled as someone like Erina, who’d been doing it for years.

I finished the show by gracefully pouring some more tea, then bowing.

“Absolutely perfect. I’m so proud.”

“Ack... why do I feel like I’ve just lost something?! Well, you’re our master, not a rival, so I guess it’s fine. Luckily, Emilia still has a long way to g—”

“Oh, so you should move your leg like this. How is this?”

“What a diligent student. You were saying, Noel?”

“D-Damnit! I’ll go train and show you just how skilled I am! You’re 10 years too early to be showing off to me! I’ll show you who the big sister is!”

Noel, who sounded like a defeated villain straight out of a cartoon, rushed out of the living room. I let out a sigh, but I couldn’t stop myself from smiling.

“Sis, you like that guy that much...?”

After their break, it was on to the next class.

Their next lesson was in reading, writing, and basic math—things that would be essential to get by on their own in life. I was working together with Erina to teach them.

“Math and writing are both extremely important. Do you know why?”

“Nope. Uh, I mean... No, Ms. Erina.”

“Leus. We didn’t know any of that, and see what happened to us?”

“Yeah, we got tricked.”

“Exactly. So these basic—but important—skills will help you from getting tricked in the future.”

No matter how physically strong you were, you won’t get far without basic reading and math skills. You would have no idea if the form you were signing was actually meant to exploit you, for instance.

“People end up being tricked into slavery because they don’t understand what they’ve signed.”

“Ugh...”

Since he’d experienced just how tough that life was, Leus instantly grew obedient when he heard that example. I didn’t want to keep reminding him of his painful past, but, at the same time, I wanted him to learn from it. He needed to respect how fragile his life was without the proper knowledge and skills.

“That’s why you’ll study and learn how to protect yourself and those you love. Even knowledge is a form of strength, after all.”

“What a wonderful way of thinking! Please teach me to write too!”

“That’s a good response, Emilia. Let’s start with something simple, like your name.”

“Okay! I’ll do my best!”

“Leus, this is how your name is written.”

“Like this?”

“That’s right. Good work, you two.”

We used a simple alphabet chart and our own writing examples to teach the two. In the beginning, it would just be a lot of repetition to memorize the letters, but I’d have them learn important everyday words soon enough.

After we finished with the alphabet, we moved over to math. I decided to teach them how to count to a hundred, as well as some basic subtraction. I also showed them some money, then had them pretend to buy something from me

with it.

“One cutlet sandwich is three iron coins. If you buy two sandwiches with this money, how much change will you have left?”

The currency here consisted of coins made from different materials. Their values weren't as easy to understand as they were in my old world, but this was the general conversion:

One stone coin was one yen.

One iron coin was fifty.

One copper was five hundred.

One silver was five thousand.

One gold was one hundred thousand.

There were coins with more value than the golden ones, though getting my hands on one of those seemed to be completely impossible. I chose to omit them entirely.

A handful of silver coins were enough to feed a family of four for about a month. Depending on where you went for your shopping, there would always be bartering and such, so the prices were never set in stone—that was just a general estimate.

I started to teach them by “selling” them cutlet sandwiches. I told them that if they did the math right, they'd be able to “buy” and eat them.

“Umm, one copper is, uh... how many iron...?”

Emilia did her best to figure out how much she would get back, while Leus just handed me the coin.

“Give me as many as you got. I'll eat them all.”

“Okay, here's your change—the Iron Claw.”

“Huh? Iron... Claw? Isn't that what you do to Noel?! No, stop! Anything but that!”

“Well, as long as you don't do anything silly again. This whole exercise is about math. Skipping it defeats the point.”

Erina seemed surprised by that development too, and smiled to herself while she watched us. Leus looked sorry and went back to trying to do the math. After a few seconds, he dropped his head down on the desk in defeat.

“I got it! Huh? Leus? What’s wrong?”

“Don’t mind him. So, how much should you get back?”

“Five iron!”

“Good job! Here are your sandwiches.”

Emilia accepted them and instantly handed one over to Leus.

“Sis... but I got mine wrong.”

“It’s okay. There’re two, so let’s share.”

Leus looked over at us, but we pretended to be busy with something else to avoid ruining the moment.

The two of them happily bit into their sandwiches.

“These are delicious even when cold! Next time, you should get yours right, too. That way we can get more.”

“Yeah!”

It was nice to see them getting along so well, but I was a little concerned about Leus’s overreliance on his sister. It would likely be tough if I forced him to change too soon, but I needed to start eventually...

They looked pretty happy while they ate their sandwiches, but their training wasn’t over yet.

“Eat up and rest for a bit. After that, we’ll go out and run again.”

“Huuuh?!”

I had them both run until the sun set.

Sis had been acting strange recently. She'd gotten really obsessed with this human.

Humans had always been mean to us. They would hit us, and wouldn't stop even if we would beg them to. They would never feed us anything, and treated us like animals.

But Sirius was different. He didn't hit us, and gave us lots of delicious food. If we ever got hurt, he would instantly come to help.

Sis said he reminded her of Dad, but I didn't think so at all. Dad was a proud and strong man who'd always watched over us. If we did something wrong, he'd scold us, but lovingly.

But this human wasn't like that. He would suddenly appear next to us, and if we ever did something bad, he would just get mad. He wasn't like Dad at all.

So why was Sis so obsessed with him?

She always blushed and looked all happy when he did something. I hated it when that happened.

I did love his servant, Erina, though. She patted my head a lot. Whenever she hugged me, she smelled just like Mom.

Big sis Noel was really loud, but she was really fun. I loved her, too.

Big bro Dii had really scary eyes, but he always made great food. If I ever looked hungry, he'd sneak me some bread or something. He was great.

But all of them kept saying that guy was so amazing. He was amazing, sure. He knew everything, and no matter how fast I ran I couldn't beat him at all.

Dad had always said I should look up to anyone stronger than me, but I didn't want to look up to that guy. I hated him. I didn't know why, but I hated him!

We had been running constantly since he'd saved us. After we woke up, we ran. After breakfast, we ran. After lunch, we had to study... but then we ran.

Sis never complained, but I was tired of it. When I told him I wanted to do something else, he said he would let me if I beat him at a race once. But I couldn't beat him no matter how hard I tried. I'd lost today too. But next time, I would win for sure! I'd copy the way he ran and surprise him by beating him!

Lunch had been especially delicious....I hated that he was the one who made it, but I guess I could compliment his cooking.

After lunch, we started to study. It was Erina's turn to teach us. She was usually so nice and gentle, but she'd get all strict when she was teaching us. Erina was really cool—she could eat without making a sound, and basically knew what I was thinking before I did. How did she do that?

She kept saying that I could do all the stuff she does easily once I found a master I wanted to serve, but I didn't want to serve that guy. Sis did, though, and she was doing her best.

I liked to do my best around Erina. She always complimented me when I did. It made me want to do even better to get more praise from her.

After that, we studied math and stuff. You would take numbers and subtract them from each other. It was really hard. It made my head hurt. But if we learned how to do this, we wouldn't be tricked by those slave people again. That was why I was trying really hard to learn.

After we finished the questions on the paper they gave us, we had to pretend to go shopping. If we got it right, we could keep what we bought. The item of the day was the pudding big sis Noel and I loved. I would definitely get it right so I could eat it!

"If one cup of pudding costs one iron coin and ten stone coins, how much would you get back?"

"I know, I know! Five iron and ten stone!"

Noel suddenly showed up and stuffed her face with pudding. She was as hyper as ever.

"Forget that... Okay, if one costs one iron and twenty stone, how much do you get back if you buy five?"

He changed the question. Okay, I needed to look at the chart he'd given us for currencies and think. It said one copper was ten iron, so... uh?

"Sirius, is this right?"

"Good job! Here's your pudding."

Sis had gotten it already. She was so good at this.

“I like pudding, but I’d like some head pats even more...”

“Oh, all right. Here.”

“Hehe.”

There was that feeling again. Why did that keep happening?

“Leus. Calm down and think about how to solve the question.”

Erina gently patted my head, which helped me calm down.

I had to do mine quickly to eat with Sis!

Um, fifty stone is one iron, so...

“You get three iron back...”

“Good job! You did great solving that all on your own.”

I got the pudding—which was good—but he also patted my head, which annoyed me a little. At the same time, I didn’t feel like swatting his hand away either. I didn’t really get my feelings.

“Leus, this is delicious!”

“Yeah!”

I didn’t know why I felt like this, but the pudding was so good that I didn’t really care at that moment.

It was nighttime, and I was struggling to fall asleep once again. I felt an annoying pain in my chest all the time, so I couldn’t sleep. Plus, I was thirsty again. I decided to get out of bed without waking Sis and have a drink. But, for some reason, I also wanted to go outside.

My chest still felt weird. Suddenly, I was outside and looking up at the sky toward the moon.

The moon was so pretty that I couldn’t stop staring at it. My body was all hot. Why did I feel so... strong suddenly? What was happening?

Sis, I... I don’t like this. I hate it... Make it stop...

Emilia came down to see me after they had finished their evening practice and had gotten ready for bed.

“Leus is acting strange...”

“He did look a little off today. Did something happen?”

“Well, last night, I woke up in the middle of the night, and he wasn’t there with me.

He returned after a little while, but he ran back into the room and jumped under the covers.”

“That is strange. What happened after that?”

“He looked fine again this morning, but when I asked him about it, he didn’t want to tell me anything. Then he got mad and told me not to tell you anything.”

“I see. I wish you would have told me earlier.”

“I-I’m sorry! But he was so desperate to keep it a secret, I...”

Her love for him kept her from saying it right away, huh? She looked quite concerned, so I needed to talk to Leus right away.

“Call Erina and Leus here, please. Hopefully having Erina here will make things easier.”

“Okay.”

As Emilia left to call them, I started to think about how Leus had acted earlier. His appetite had been normal, but he hadn’t gotten upset with me, for some reason. Usually, he’d be glaring at me at the very least, but he almost looked scared instead. I noticed something and was about to use “Search” when I was interrupted.

“Sirius!”

Emilia came rushing into my room with tears forming in her eyes. She had some kind of paper in her hand.

“Leus is... Leus is gone! He left!”

I instantly had everyone gather upstairs. Looking at the paper Emilia had been carrying, I read the awkwardly written letters out loud.

“Take care of Sis. Goodbye.”

I looked over at the others.

“What do you guys think happened? He doesn’t seem like someone who’d run away just because he’s tired from training or something.

“I agree. He’s not like that at all.”

“Agreed!”

“Me too.”

I looked over at Emilia, who knew Leus best. She just shook her head desperately while tears streamed down her face.

“Emilia, please—did Leus show any signs of not liking it here?”

“No... everyone is so nice. He was really happy. He wouldn’t... run away like that...”

“Okay. So there’s something else at play here. It must be whatever happened last night, then.”

“What do you mean?”

I explained what Emilia had told me to the others.

“I have to find him and ask him myself.”

“Good, Sirius! Go bring him back!”

“No, I’m going to ask him why he left. I know where he is, so I’ll get there quick.”

I had already found him by using “Search,” but I hadn’t retrieved him instantly for a simple reason—if he really left by his own will, I would respect that.

The most important thing that I wanted my students to do was to find their own purpose and follow it. If he had really chosen to leave, it was not my business to tell him he couldn't.

“Sirius, your sword.”

Erina handed me the belt with my sword and knife, and gazed at me in worry. I smiled back as an answer, which made her expression loosen up a little.

While I was putting the belt on, Emilia rushed over to me and bowed.

“Please... take me with you!”

“Erina.”

“Of course. Here, put this on.”

“Huh?”

Erina quickly brought Emilia some clothes to change into, but the young girl just stared at them in confusion.

“Come on. Change. Quickly.”

“Huh? But... I thought you'd say no. Won't this be dangerous? Are you sure I can come?”

“You're his sister, so of course you can come. You need to hear what he has to say on the matter.”

“Thank you so much!”

She bowed once again, but it was still too early for that. I looked over at Noel for help, and she quickly stepped in.

“Got it! Emilia, let's save the crying for later and change quickly!”

“Okay!”

I looked over at Dii and Erina.

“He might have been attacked by something. Prepare some medicine and whatever else he might need.”

“Of course. We'll be waiting for your return.”

I walked over to the front door, and Emilia quickly followed behind me. She was wearing a set of firmly woven pants and a coat—the standard adventurer gear.

“I’m here!”

“Okay, let’s go. Emilia, get on my back.”

“O-Okay... here I go.”

Emilia hesitated for a second, then climbed up on my back. I used “String” to tie her to me and followed it up with “Boost.”

“Make sure you stay still, so the string doesn’t wrap around your neck. All right, let’s go.”

“L-Let’s go!”

“Good luck!”

All the servants saw us off as I jumped into the air.

“Are you scared?”

“I-I’m fine! You can go faster. Just... get me to Leus.”

“I get that you’re worried, but please try to stay calm. Look, see how pretty the moon is? Focus on that for now.”

“W-Wow, it’s... beautiful.”

Emilia seemed to calm down a little after she saw the moon. She remained silent for a while, then spoke up again.

“I wonder if Leus is watching the moon too... he’s so hopeless.”

“He is. His reason for running away had better be good. Otherwise, I’m going to smack him.”

“I’ll slap his cheek, don’t worry.”

“That’s the spirit. Okay, I’m going to go a little faster.”

“Okay!”

After I arrived at the lake where I had looked for mana leaves a few years back,

I slowed down. I made sure there were no monsters around by using “Search,” then set Emilia down and started to scan the area.

“Leus! Where are you?!”

“Shh. Don’t be too loud.”

While there were no monsters nearby at the moment, her yelling could attract some. It would be bad if they started to show up.

“But Leus is all alone...”

“Don’t worry, he’s right over there.”

I pointed over to the opposite side of the lake, where Leus was sitting.

Emilia looked relieved. She was about to rush over to him, but—

“STAY AWAY!”

Leus shouted in a voice I’d never heard him use with his sister before.

“L-Leus? What’s wrong? It’s me! Come on, let’s go home. Okay?”

“I told you to stay away!”

Emilia was clearly shocked, but she stayed resolute and continued to talk.

“What’s wrong, Leus? We said we’d stay strong together, didn’t we? Why would you run away on your own instead of talking to me?! What if something happened to you?!”

“I’m fine! I’ve been running a lot, and I’m stronger now! Plus, I know math and how to read! I’ll be fine on my own!”

“Don’t be stupid! It hasn’t been that long. You’re not ready at all!”

“I am! I’m really strong now!”

This wasn’t going anywhere, so I tapped Emilia on the shoulder. She shook her head in desperation as tears streamed down her face.

“I’m sorry! I’ll convince him right away! Please, don’t leave my brother!”

“You’re too worked up. This isn’t going to lead anywhere. Let me handle it from here.”

“Okay.”

I approached Leus by walking forward slowly. How would I get him to come back home?

“Leus. What are you doing over there all by yourself?”

“None of your business!”

“Of course it is. I’m the one housing you guys, and your teacher. When one of my students seems troubled, I want to help.”

“I don’t want to be your student!”

He had never admitted to being my student, even though he had been going along with my exercise plans and so on just fine.

“Well, that’s all right. But I am the person who’s been feeding you, teaching you, and giving you a warm place to sleep at night. I should at least be allowed to ask what’s wrong, right?”

He didn’t reply.

“Come on, Leus—answer me. Why did you leave? That little note isn’t enough to just let you go.”

“I’m... stronger now.”

“From a bit of running? Don’t be silly. It’s good for you, yes, but it’s far too early for any serious improvement.”

Leus got up and shouted.

“I’m much stronger than before now! Just take Sis and go back!”

“Is that so? You lost to me today, too, didn’t you? If getting stronger means being able to shout louder, then you need to grow up, Leus.”

“Shut up! Shut up, shut up, shut uuuup!”

He had been pretty unstable when we’d taken him in due to his past trauma, but Erina had been making good progress with that recently. Being fed well and having a safe place to sleep at night had clearly helped, too. This was different than his trauma—something was definitely off.

“What?! Why are you still here?! Go home! If you don’t, I’ll... I’ll force you!”

Leus tensed up while he continued to cry. Just then, the dim moonlight hit Leus’s hair, and it started to grow longer.

“Leus?! No... it can’t be...”

Emilia jumped up with a terrified expression as Leus’s transformation continued. It wasn’t just that his hair was getting longer—he was growing fur all over his body. His nose grew into a snout, and before long, he had turned into a literal wolf that walked on two legs. The only proof left that he was once Leus were the torn clothes on his body.

“It can’t be... Leus is a cursed child?”

“Cursed? What’s going on, Emilia?”

“It’s a rare condition in our tribe... they call it cursed children. They are said to bring misfortune and destruction, so... they’re killed as soon as they are discovered.”

Silver wolves were incredibly loving and faithful towards their own, so I had not expected them to have such a grim law. The world was truly full of mystery.

“Two years ago, there was a cursed child in our village. It went berserk and attacked us, so my dad jumped in and...”

“Killed him. Right in front of you guys?”

“Yes.”

Things started to make sense.

Leus had found out that he was a cursed child and must have been terrified, since he knew what came of them. Without the courage to take his own life, he fled from the house to keep his sister safe. I guessed it was something along those lines, at least.

“Look at me! I’m a monster! I can’t be near you, Sis! So please, go home!”

“NO! Don’t talk like that, Leus! I can’t leave you here...”

“It’s okay, Sis. I’m fine on my own now. I’m super strong like this.”

“No! Don’t... don’t leave me all alone...!”

Emilia fell to the ground as she sobbed. She was clearly panicked at the thought of losing her last living family member.

I looked at the two of them, shook my head, and snorted loudly.

“Hmph! This is stupid!”

“Huh?! S-Sirius...?”

“What did you just say, you bastard?!”

“You heard me. You guys are being ridiculous. It’s totally stupid.”

Emilia looked hurt by that comment, but I ignored her and pointed to Leus.

“Okay, Leus—fight me. If you can beat me, then I’ll let you do whatever you want. If you lose, you have to listen to what I tell you, no matter what.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?! You told me I can do whatever I want, so that’s what I’m doing! Why are you trying to stop me?!”

“Because I know you’re lying. This isn’t what you want at all.”

Of course I wanted him to find his own purpose in life, but I also felt responsible for him. What if, for example, he wanted to leave to be with a girl, but she was actually taking advantage of him? Well, then I’d smack him and say “no,” of course.

“You said you’re strong now, right? Fight me and prove it, then.”

I removed my sword belt and threw it to the side.

Leus let out a howl, held his fist out, and started to sprint toward me.

“You’re always looking down on me! I’ll show you!”

His eyes lit up with anger as he rushed toward me in his wolf form.

“Take this!”

He swung his fist at me. While I had planned on simply blocking it with my own, he had been much faster than I had anticipated, and I had to twist myself out of the way. Right after the first punch, he followed up with another. I dodged that one by leaning forward, and struck him back in the stomach in the process.

“That doesn’t hurt at all!”

His tough muscles absorbed most of the impact. He smiled arrogantly as I took a few steps back to gain some distance.

“How’s that?! I’m strong, see?”

“You’ve gotten stronger, yes, but it doesn’t matter if you can’t hit me.”

“You won’t be acting tough for long! I won’t forgive you, even when you say you’re sorry!”

Leus charged at me again, and started to unleash a flurry of blows my way. I was only able to barely escape his fists as I walked backward.

He fired off a powerful straight punch, but I jumped out of the way. His punch landed on the tree that had been behind me and broke clean through.

“Tch, stop running! You look down at me all the time, but all you can do is run?!”

“Talk big after you win, not during the fight.”

I countered with another solid punch to his gut, but his muscles felt like stone.

“It doesn’t hurt at all! I’m too strong!”

He tried to hit me again, but I swiftly moved out of the way and hit him right in the solar plexus. While his muscles blocked the majority of the hit, he still stumbled back and fell from the impact.

“Hahaha! I don’t even feel it! I’m going to beat you! Just give up!”

He got back up and fired off another flurry of blows. His punches had broken a tree in half, so I would have definitely been in trouble if I’d gotten hit. That was if I’d gotten hit.

“Amateur.”

I could read his movements like an open book. I easily avoided an oncoming punch, grabbed his neck, pulled him toward me, and kicked him in the face.

He went flying and did several loops in the air before he crashed into the ground.

“Agh?! Wh-What...?!”

It was a violent technique that used the opponent’s momentum against them. Usually, they’d never know what had hit them. It was very dangerous to use it on an amateur, but I’d held back enough that it wouldn’t hurt him too bad.

It was meant to be more of a way to scare him off than to actually hurt him. He quickly got up again and stared at me in shock.

“You might be fast and strong, but your technique is terrible. You’re just a brat.”

His punches had all been straight, without a single feint, or any type of technique to throw the opponent off. It couldn’t have even been called fighting.

“Damnit!”

He still looked a little wobbly, but he stood up and rushed at me yet again. I had to compliment his resilience, but that was about the only thing he had going for him. He kept trying to hit my head, which made his punches incredibly easy to dodge.

I didn’t even have to move more than my neck before I’d retaliate with a punch of my own.

“I told you, it doesn’t hurt at al—agh?!”

Leus staggered back in confusion, then threw up.

I had been fighting him normally, just to see just how much he could take. The punch I’d just thrown was the first time I’d used “Boost” during the whole fight. I knew he wouldn’t die from it, so I decided to end things quickly.

“Agh?! Hah, y-you got lucky!”

He really was an amateur. Instead of backing off to calm down, he just kept going. I easily swerved his attacks, kicked his feet, grabbed him mid-air, and slammed him to the ground.

“Are you sure you can get anywhere by yourself with that strength, Leus?”

“I’m... not done... yet...”

He rose to his feet yet again. He was wobbling even worse than before, but he

still tried to attack me. This time, he tried to throw faster, less powerful punches, but I was able to read them all with ease. I'd parry and hit him back, then repeat the process. But no matter how many times I avoided him and hit him back, he refused to give up. He was crying heavily and clearly in a lot of pain.

“Why... can't I... hit you? Why... won't you go down?”

“A brat like you couldn't beat me in a million years.”

“Just... do it. Let me win... Just... let me go.”

“Do you really want to go?”

“I have to. Can't... be here. I shouldn't be...”

He barely had the strength left to stand, yet he kept trying to punch me. I hit him one last time, which sent him crashing to the ground.

There was blood dripping from his mouth where I'd hit him, but he somehow managed to force himself back up. But that was it—he didn't move. He just stood there and stared at me. His eyes were filled with fear. They were the eyes of a child scared of the big bad monster in front of them.

“I'll ask this one last time. Do you really want to leave your sister and go?”

“Yes... I have to... or I'll bring her misfortune!”

He used all the energy he had left in him for one final punch. I didn't even have to dodge that one—it was like being hit by a puff of air.

As Leus started to collapse, I grabbed his body and held him up.

“Leus, look at me.”

“Do I look like a silver wolf to you?”

“No.”

“That's right. I'm just a human. I don't care about this cursed nonsense. You are just a brat to me, fur or no fur. If anything, I think raising you will be even more interesting now.”

“Huh? Ah?”

“I don't care about a stupid law that says kids should be killed just because they

can do this! If someone comes along and tells me to hurt you because of that I'll knock his teeth out."

I looked over to Emilia this time.

"What do you think? Do you want Leus dead because of his 'curse?'"

A shiver ran through her upon hearing the word "dead," and she quickly shook her head.

"That's right. That's why you didn't know what to do earlier, right? Now say it out loud. What do you want, Emilia?"

"I... I don't want to lose Leus! I don't want anyone to hurt him! I want to be with him! I don't care about those stupid laws!"

She finally managed to collect herself enough to say what was on her mind.

I looked back to Leus again.

"Did you hear that? She doesn't care about this curse. So, Leus, what do you want? Do you really want to leave her?"

"N-No..."

Leus wiped away the snot and tears across his bruised face. As his body started to return to normal, he also began to weep uncontrollably.

"No! No, no, no! I don't want to be alone! I don't want to leave Sis ever again! I want Erina to pat my head! I want to play with big sis Noel! I want to eat big bro Dii's cooking! I don't want to leave! I want to go home!"

That was it. Kids should say what was on their mind. It was only when you grew up that you needed to start thinking about keeping some of it in—that was the beauty of being a kid.

It was a struggle, but I had finally managed to calm Leus down and got him to say what he really wanted.

I handed him over to Emilia and watched as they wept and hugged.

"Leus... thank God. Oh, Leus..."

"Sis, I'm sorry... I'm sorry!"

After they had calmed down, I called out to Leus. We had made a promise, after all.

“Leus, you lost. Now you have to do what I tell you.”

“Sirius, please let me do that instead. I don’t want him to suffer any more...”

“No. This was our fight, and our promise. You can’t step in for him this time.”

I looked over at Leus and smiled.

“Leus, come home.”

“Okay.”

Leus smiled back, just like a kid his age should have. Then, he passed out.

I had Emilia climb on my back, while I carried Leus in my arms, and headed back to the house.

As we walked inside, my servants were all there to greet us.

“Welcome back, Sirius, Emilia. And you too, Leus.”

“We’re back. Please take care of him right away.”

“I will.”

“Phew, his cute little face is all beat up! Do we have enough bandages for this?”

I handed Leus over to Dii and Noel, then helped Emilia down.

Erina came over with a towel and some water and handed them to us.

“Good work. I’m certain Leus will refrain from any further recklessness from now on.”

“I might have gone a little too far, but I’m glad I got him to come back home.”

“On the contrary—you did well, Sirius. If anything, you might have gone too easy on him. A servant cannot just leave their master without permission. Depending on the master, they may even be killed for it!”

It’s not like Leus was my servant, but Erina seemed genuinely mad for once. I didn’t dare speak up against her.

“He seems to have learned from this, though. I can tell by his cute sleeping

face.”

“I did smack him around a fair bit, after all. Hopefully he’s not scared of me now.”

“Don’t worry about that. You did it out of love and concern. I’m sure he knows that.”

As Erina and I finished talking, it occurred to me that Emilia hadn’t said anything yet. Maybe she was mad about what I did to Leus?

“Want to go see Leus?”

“Huh? Oh, yes, right.”

She started to run off, but stopped on the way and turned to me. She bowed deeply.

“Um... thank you so much. Because of you, the two of us can still be together.”

“Well, I did hit him a lot. Sorry for that. Anyways, if he actually had a good reason to leave, I would have let him. If he finds his purpose, he should follow it. That goes for you too, Emilia.”

“Sirius, I’ve already found my new purpose in life. Uh... sorry!”

Emilia gazed at me for a second, then wrapped her arms around me. Suddenly, I felt a jolt of pain in my shoulder. She had bitten me. It didn’t hurt much, but it did take me by surprise. She whispered something in my ear, looked up at me with flushed cheeks, and ran off.

Erina stared at me in shock and confusion.

“I can’t believe she bit her master. Should I punish her for you?”

“No, no, wait! That’s a sign of affection for their kind! She wasn’t attacking me or anything!”

I explained what Emilia had told me about silver wolves biting each other. I thought about what she had whispered.

“I love you. I’ll follow you wherever you go.”

Her admiration had turned into love. That had also probably meant that she wanted to be my servant.

“I see. If Noel were here, I’m sure she’d say ‘told you so.’”

“You sure look happy.”

“I’m just glad you’ve found another loyal servant.”

The anger was drained from Erina’s face in an instant and replaced by a gentle smile.

“Leave her training to me. I’ll teach her how to be the perfect servant.”

“She’s my student too, so you don’t have to go that far.”

“I do. I’ll teach her everything I know. Knowing her, she’ll be keen on learning.”

“Well, that’s true, but... just don’t push yourselves.”

“Of course. Well then, leave the rest to me.”

Erina had done a great job teaching Noel, and she had been the person closest to me my whole life, so I felt safe trusting Emilia with her.

“Now there’s finally someone to take my place...”

I pretended not to hear Erina’s whisper as I headed toward my room.

The next day, I was running in the backyard again, like usual. Normally, I’d have the siblings run with me, but Leus was still sleeping. I wanted to let him rest. I didn’t have to match their pace, which meant I was able to run as fast as I could while still keeping my footsteps silent.

I had lost count of how many laps I’d done, though I had worked up quite a sweat. Erina showed up with a drink and a towel like usual, which I happily accepted.

“How are the kids doing? Are they up yet?”

“They’re still resting. It seems like they’ve woken up, but they asked me to give them some time to themselves through the door.”

That was fine, though I didn’t want them staying locked up there alone for too long. It might have an undesired effect if they were to just hide.

“Should I try leaving food outside their door to lure them out?”

“Let’s leave that as a last resort.”

I’d feel bad if I were to treat them like animals by luring them out with food. Then again, wolves were a part of the canid family—in Leus’s case, it might not have been a bad idea.

“Good morning, Sirius!”

Only Dii and Noel were seated at the table for breakfast. Noel went to go ask them one more time if they wanted to join us, but she stopped in her tracks as she was about to leave the living room.

“Oh my. Hi there.”

“Ah?!”

The door was opened ever so slightly, and two pairs of wolf ears were barely visible through the crack where the two of them were peeking in. They jumped in surprise when they were discovered, but Noel casually opened the door and let them in.

“Good... morning...”

Emilia greeted us, but the fairly bruised Leus stayed silent and looked at the ground. His eyes were red, so he had probably been crying quite a lot since he’d woken up.

Erina looked over at him, and called out in a calm voice.

“Good morning. Leus, aren’t you going to greet everyone?”

“Ugh... Good... m-morning.”

“Good boy. Now sit down and eat before the food gets cold.”

“Come on guys! Sit, sit!”

Noel pushed the two of them over to the table.

There was a serving of bread and bacon in front of each seat except for Leus’s.

“Here you go.”

Dii handed Leus a bowl of warm soup. It was rare for Dii to show any emotion, but whenever he talked to Leus, he seemed more gentle than usual.

“You've got some cuts in your mouth, right? If you can eat this, I'll make the same thing everyone has for you too.”

The siblings didn't say anything; so, to keep things from getting awkward, I had everyone hold hands.

“Well, then, everyone—let's thank God for the food and dig in!”

“Thanks for the food!”

“Th-Thanks for the food.”

After that, everyone started to eat.

Thanking God before eating was a normal custom in this world, though holding hands was something I had taught everyone.

The siblings hesitated for a second, then started to eat too. Leus brought the spoon to his mouth, but he winced as the hot soup probably hit one of his cuts.

“Hmm, maybe hot soup was a mistake. Should I get you something cool?”

“It tastes better hot, though, right?”

“That is true. Hey, hey, Leus! That's the soup you guys ate the first day you came here, you know? Can you tell?”

“If you can still taste it, I'd like your opinion on it.”

Dii looked over at Leus and waited for his reply. Leus's eyes grew a little watery as everyone looked at him, but he took another spoonful and nodded.

“I-It's... delicious.”

He was on the verge of crying, but didn't stop eating. Leus quickly finished his soup, placed his hands on the table, and bowed deeply.

“I'm sorry! I'm sorry for running away without telling anyone! I won't do anything like that again! Please... let me stay here with my sister!”

Everyone stopped what they were doing to look over at him. Erina just softly replied.

“Leus. Do you remember the last thing Sirius said to you last night?”

“Come home.”

“Well, there you go. You’re home now, Leus.”

“Welcome home!”

“Ugh... sob, sob.”

Realizing he had been forgiven, Leus started to weep.

Emilia gently stroked his back, while Noel wiped his tears away with a handkerchief.

“It’s okay to cry, but you’re still hungry, right? Think you can eat some bread?”

“Eat some meat, too. You need the energy.”

“Leus, you can have some of my egg, too.”

“Thank you...”

Our breakfast continued with the two of them doting on Leus the whole time. Leus came over to me as we were having some tea after our meal. His visible annoyance toward me was completely gone, and now he just looked like a troubled child. He hesitated for a bit before he finally bowed and spoke up.

“Sirius, I’m sorry. And... thank you very much.”

“It’s okay. How are your wounds? Does it hurt?”

“It hurts a little, but I’m fine.”

“Good. But, just so you know, I won’t heal those wounds. You need to feel the consequences of your actions.”

“Okay!”

He finally smiled like a kid his age should for the first time. I tried to pat his head. Not only did he not look annoyed, but he actually blushed and started to wag his tail. This marked the moment I had finally gained his trust.

“So how does the cursed child thing work? Do you turn at night without your control?”

“That’s what happened at first, but now I can control it.”

It was good to know that he could control it. Apparently, when he looked at the moon, his body would grow hot and he’d feel like transforming. At the end

of the day, though, he'd be able to choose to do it or not himself.

It could still spell trouble for him later in life, so I told him to never transform without a good reason, and to come to me for help if something happened.

Leus was a good kid. Now that I had his trust, it was clear he'd do what I told him.

"Sirius, I want to be stronger! I want to be able to protect Sis no matter what! Please take me in as your student!"

"I already consider you my student, don't worry. But I'll work you hard, so be ready for that."

"I will! I want to be as strong as you!"

I had finally gained their trust, and we could start again from there. It was then an issue of training the two of them well, while also not neglecting my own. I smiled to myself as I thought of the tough—but rewarding—road ahead.

Even though I was fired up, I decided not to do any training with them today. Leus was still hurt, and Erina was talking about how she wanted to teach Emilia more about being a servant; so I left Emilia to her.

I decided to head over to the old man for some practice instead. While I waited for Dii to make me a packed lunch, I did some practice swings in the garden. I was trying to imitate Liolo's "Single Strike" style. It was built around ending everything in a single attack. That meant it took an incredible amount of skill to master. His crazy flurry of eight attacks at once was impossible for me to replicate, even with "Boost"—so far, I'd only been able to do six. Not only was he able to do it, but he did it with his massive greatsword. He truly was a monster among men.

As I was practicing, I spotted Leus watching me from the hallway. I'd told him to go rest, but I smiled and waved him over. He smiled back, and came running toward me with his tail wagging.

"Are you sure you don't want to go rest a bit longer?"

"I'm fine. My body doesn't hurt that much anymore. I wanted to come watch you instead!"

Well, it was good to hear he was healing fast. Maybe that was because he was a cursed child too?

Leus looked over at my training sword curiously, which reminded me that I'd never actually practiced with a sword in front of him. Maybe I should let him try?

"Are you interested in swords?"

"Yes! You were super cool when you swung it around earlier!"

"I see. Want to try?"

I handed him the sword, and he stared at it in excitement.

"Are you sure?"

"Try it. If it hurts swinging it around now, let's wait until you've healed a bit more."

I wasn't sure what kind of style Leus would want to fight with later on, but there was no drawback to learning the basics of sword combat.

He smiled and tried to swing the sword around. Unfortunately, because of his poor technique, the blade barely made a sound as it cut through the air. He tilted his head in confusion.

"It doesn't sound the same..."

"It's because you're just swinging it aimlessly. Here, let me show you."

I took the sword back and demonstrated. I wasn't very skilled with swords, but I knew a thing or two. After some explanation, I handed the sword back. This time, the sound was a bit louder.

"Here's your lunch, Sirius. Oh? Are you teaching Leus how to use a sword?"

"I just had him try it out. He did pretty well for his first time."

Dii came out to hand me my lunch and spotted us training. He seemed excited about it, so I let him take over from there and headed out to meet the old man instead.

"If you're not busy, why don't you help him with his training for a bit? I'm heading out now anyway."

“Be safe.”

I nodded back, then jumped into the air. As I flew away, I could see Dii giving Leus some pointers and smiled to myself.

I arrived at the old man’s place. We did our usual mock battle, but I was unable to dodge one of his attacks, and went flying by it.

“Argh?!”

The impact had really knocked the air out of me, though I was somehow able to secure a safe landing. Still, I felt a bone break in my left arm. Had we been fighting with real swords, I’d have been dead.

“Phew. How about it? Round two?”

“Heh... I’m done for now, I think.”

He smiled in satisfaction and sat down too. I guess he was at his limit, as well.

That last attack had really caught me by surprise. His style was focused on singular, powerful strikes. Some of his techniques were several swift strikes delivered at once, but the sudden strike he’d just hit me with was very different from his usual style. I had gotten too used to his fighting style and had let my guard down.

“I wasn’t expecting that technique at all. Your style really is impressive.”

“Thank you. I haven’t named it yet, but I’m glad it worked.”

“You haven’t named it yet?”

“I made that one specifically for you. It’s meant to deal with fast opponents using a feint. It’s totally different from most of my other techniques, so perfecting it was pretty tough.”

I did not expect him to create a whole new technique to defeat me. He really was dedicated.

”Though, now that I’ve used it once, I don’t know if it will work on you again. I’ll have to think about whether I’ll use it more or not later.”

He was right—I was confident I’d be able to dodge it next time, so it was possible he’d just not use it again. We’d probably continue to fight like this until

one of us was unable to continue. Since we both enjoyed the fighting and training, that was fine.

“You did manage to block it somehow, it seems. How’s your arm?”

“I’ll be able to heal it just fine, but I think I’m done for today.”

The bone had cracked for sure. Thankfully, with my healing ability, I’d have it back to normal within a couple of hours.

“All right. Well then, let’s have lunch.”

“Speaking of—Dii made us lunches. Here’s yours.”

“Haha! Now we’re talking!”

He would always take food from my lunches when I came to see him, so I had Dii make extra. The old man sure loved my servants’ cooking. He walked into the house with a big smile on his face, and I followed after him. That day, Dii had prepared cutlet sandwiches and a variety of sides. His cooking always looked a little fancier than mine, and it tasted great. I explained what had happened with Leus while we ate.

“Oh yeah, Leus seems interested in learning to use a sword.”

“I see. Well, it’s good that he’s interested in learning. I started about that age myself.”

“So you’ve been training for about 50 years, then? I’m amazed you’ve gotten this good in that time.”

“Hmph. You can flatter me all you want, but I still lost to you. Hey, what do you think about taking on my style?”

We’d sparred countless times by now, but this was the first time he’d brought up passing on his style to me.

“I’m very flattered, but our fighting styles are too different. I don’t feel like I would be able to do your techniques justice.”

“I see. It’s not like I must have a successor to this style, or anything, but it feels like a waste to just let it die.”

The single strike style wasn’t something he’d learned from anyone, but a set of

techniques he created himself. The reason he'd even made it in the first place was because if he had a style, strong opponents would show up to learn from it. That was all.

"Why don't you teach it to Leus, then?"

"Oh? You sure about that?"

"I don't mind. That's as long as he wants to, of course."

My techniques were all based on my knowledge from my previous life, so passing it on would be all but impossible. That's why my current teaching regiment consisted of basic stamina and strength training. I actually didn't know what kind of weapon or fighting style to teach them later, so Liolè's willingness to teach Leus the single strike style would be incredibly helpful to me.

"I plan on doing some basic training and studying with him for about half a year to build a foundation. Then, if he's okay with it, I'd like to bring him here."

"That sounds good. I look forward to it."

"Please do. Do you mind if I try teaching him some of the basics of your techniques in the meantime?"

"Go ahead. But the kid better have potential! I expect someone who can cut stone with his sword, or at least do four swings at once!"

"Don't be too harsh on him. Even I can't do more than six at once."

"I haven't even taught you how, and you're already doing six? You're the crazy one!"

"I just tried it and I could do six. I don't know what to tell you."

The old man and I talked until my arm had fully healed.

When I returned home, I was met by a surprising sight.

"Oh, Sirius! Welcome home!"

Leus was still in the garden swinging the sword. He had taken breaks throughout the day, but seeing him practice so zealously despite his injuries made me smile. Dii was standing next to him and nodding in satisfaction.

"Sirius—you're incredibly talented, but I think you've found someone who can

give you a run for your money.”

I looked over at Leus again. He has definitely improved already. He was imitating Liolè's strikes that I'd shown him before. The sound of his swings had gotten a lot better.

“Hmm... I don't get it. Sirius, how did you do the six strike thing? I can't do more than three no matter how hard I try...”

“Whoa. That's amazing.”

“Right?”

He was able to imitate a technique he'd only seen once with such ease. Not only that, but each strike seemed to be well executed. It appeared as though he was very gifted. I gave him a couple of pointers, then left him with Dii and headed into the house. As I entered, a blushing Emilia greeted me.

“Umm, w-welcome home!”

“I'm back.”

She had been acting a little embarrassed around me since she'd confessed the day before, but she seemed extra tense now. What had Erina taught her?

“Are you okay, Emilia? Let me know if there's anything bothering you.”

“W-Well, I have a question—do you prefer my hair long or short?”

“Your hair?”

Her hair was about shoulder length. I thought it looked good on her, but it would look even better a bit longer. I told her that, she nodded in excitement with sparkling eyes.

“Got it! I'll work hard for you, Sirius! Once I'm an adult, I'll be a good girlfriend too! P-Please wait for me!”

It felt like she just said something outrageous... had I just imagined things? She ran off like a scared puppy the moment she said it, so I didn't get to ask her either.

I felt hungry, so I headed to the kitchen. There, I was greeted by yet another strange sight—Emilia and Noel were holding bottles of milk and chugging them

together.

“I’ll work hard and make sure I grow up nice and big for Sirius!”

“I won’t lose! I’ll grow up and turn into a real hottie!”

I felt like I had witnessed something I shouldn’t have, so I pretended that I hadn’t seen anything and left quietly.

That night we all gathered in the garden, which was lit up by the moonlight. The moon here wasn’t like in my old world, where it would wax and wane. Instead, it was always a full moon; but clouds would sometimes get in the way. On this particular night, it was really bright and fully exposed. Well, it wasn’t like we had gathered there just to look at the moon—the siblings had asked us to meet them there.

“Please come meet us in the garden tonight when the moon is at its brightest.”

The two of them had holed up in the house all evening as they prepared something.

“What a beautiful moon. I wonder what those two are up to.”

“They asked me for wine earlier.”

“Wine? They want us to drink together out here? That doesn’t sound too bad. The moon is so beautiful.”

“Sirius and those two can’t drink, though; they’re too young. I don’t know why they asked for it, but they seemed serious.”

“Speak of the devil.”

Just then, the two of them walked out of the house carrying a small desk.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“It’s fine. So, why did you gather us all out here?”

“We want to show you a ritual. Leus.”

“Right. Is it fine here?”

Leus placed the desk down. Emilia took out bottles of wine and juice and placed them on the table. It looked like they were making an offering to the

moon.

“First, thank you all for coming.”

“Thank you!”

They both bowed and thanked us. It looked like a pair of kids doing their first presentation ever, which made me smile.

“You see, there’s a certain ritual in our clan that is done during festivals or marriage ceremonies. It’s called the ‘silver moon ritual.’ It’s a special ritual where someone swears their eternal allegiance to someone else. Once done, it can never be taken back.”

Leus started to pour some juice into a cup on the desk.

“Really? Never ever? Silver wolves are so cool!”

“Our dad said it’s an old custom. I’ve never seen anyone break a silver moon ritual, ever.”

“You said it’s used for marriage too, right? Makes sense, then. They say silver wolves have incredibly strong bonds with family.

“I see! You sure know a lot, Sirius!”

“I just read about it in a book. I never thought I’d actually get to see it first hand.”

“We had you all gather here to witness our oath. Sirius, please stand here.” Emilia waved me over, and I walked up in front of the desk. What, am I not supposed to watch?

“Are you ready, Leus?”

“I’m ready!”

The two of them got on one knee in front of me, holding their hands up in front of their chests like they were praying to God.

“Oh, great silver moon, mother of all, please watch over us as we swear our oath.”

The two of them turned to the moon, speaking in solemn voices.

“I, Emilia Silverion...”

“I, Leus Silverion...”

“Swear that we will follow our master, Sirius, until the end of time.”

As they finished, silence filled the garden. You would have been able to hear a pin drop.

I was more than happy enough just knowing they trusted me.

They were still kids, so I had figured that one day, they'd go their own ways. Maybe they would settle down and start families of their own. Their oath might become an issue then. I was so stunned, though, that I didn't say anything.

They both looked so serious as they stared straight at me.

“We talked about it all day and decided together. We want to stay by your side!”

“I'm just a kid, so I can't do much now, but one day I want to grow strong enough to be the one saving you, Sirius!”

“We'll make sure you won't regret it, so... will you please accept our oath?”

They were kids, but it was still admirable to have someone go to such lengths to follow me. I knew the resolve it had taken for them to put themselves out there like that, so I wouldn't let that gesture be in vain. I couldn't turn them down.

“Of course. I accept.”

They smiled and hugged each other in excitement as the servants applauded. I wasn't sure how to react, so I just scratched my head awkwardly. Emilia soon handed one of the cups to me.

“We'll continue with the ritual, so please hold this.”

She mumbled something about it usually requiring alcohol, then bit her finger and dripped some of her blood into the cup. Leus then stepped forward and did the same.



“This is a gesture showing that we offer our very blood to you. Normally, during wedding ceremonies, the partner will drink the blood, but you don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

“Of course I will. And I promise, I’ll make sure I train you well. I’ll make sure you don’t regret following me.”

I raised my cup to the moon as if it was watching. I felt like I should say something in return to make sure they trusted me.

“This is just something we did without even telling you. You don’t have to swear anything back.”

“That’s right, we just chose to do it without asking.”

I just smiled at them, then drank the contents of the cup in one go. I didn’t care if there was blood in it or not—it would feel rude not to drink it. I wanted to show them I cared.

“Thanks for the drink. All right, was that the last step?”

They both stared at me in surprise for a second, then smiled and hugged once again.

“Yes! Please take care of us from now on!”

“We’ll work hard for you too, Sirius!”

“Good. I’ll do my best to train you two.”

The servants came up to congratulate us as the ritual finished.

“Congratulations. It was an honor to be able to watch such a special ceremony.”

“So now you guys are full-fledged servants too, right? Let’s work hard together!”

“Come ask me any time if you need help with something.”

“Thank you!”

The servants all seemed really excited to officially have the siblings join their ranks.

“Hey, Emilia. Can everyone have some of this wine?”

“Yes. Normally, a ceremony like this would have a big feast with lots of food and stuff, but we couldn’t prepare any of that. We figured we should at least have some wine.”

“We made it ourselves, though, so it might not taste good.”

“I’ll cook for you whenever you want.”

“I’m sorry. This is our ceremony, so we wanted to prepare everything ourselves.”

“Hmm, I see. That makes sense.”

“Come on, don’t just stand there! Have some.”

Erina started to hand out glasses of wine to the others, while the siblings and I just had juice.

“Well, then, let’s celebrate. Let’s see... Noel, you do the toast.”

“And don’t go on too many tangents, please. Just keep it short.”

“Huuuh?! Well, all right. I’ll just do a normal one. Umm...”

We all gathered around the table and raised our glasses.

“We’ve got two new servants in the house! Cheers!”

“Cheers!”

The sound of laughter and glasses clinking together filled the garden as we enjoyed ourselves in the moonlight.



“Take that!”

Emilia dodged the goblin’s attack and slashed its throat with her dagger. Another one charged at her from behind, but she was quick to cut that one down, as well. A third one tried to attack her, too, but she retaliated.

“Air Slash!”

She fired off a wind spell, which cut the last goblin’s head clean off. After she made sure there were no more threats in sight, she sheathed her dagger.

“Haah!”

Leus swung his sword at a goblin with all his might. The blow cleaved its head in half. As it saw what had happened to its comrade, another goblin froze in fear, only to quickly face its demise by Leus’s sword. The last goblin in the group jumped toward Leus, but took a solid knee to the face and fell to the ground.

“Break!”

Another small group of goblins rushed toward him, but the five consecutive strikes he sent off in a flurry cut them all to bits. While the two of them were fighting, I was watching them from a nearby boulder. I wasn’t slacking off, or anything—this was training.

If something were to happen, I’d rush in to help; but they seemed to be handling themselves just fine.

It had been a year since the silver moon ritual. The two of them had gotten even more serious about training and had grown a lot. They’d become strong fighters. We were up in the mountains fighting a group of goblins, but they didn’t even pose a challenge for them anymore. The training of the day focused on fighting bigger groups of enemies. They had gone up against about 30 goblins, but they had killed them so easily that I almost felt bad for the monsters.

Seeing them grow so much in just a year made me feel pretty proud.

Emilia’s mana affinity was wind. She fought primarily with magic, as well as a trusty dagger. I had taught her how to focus and imagine the spells clearly, so she was able to cast them without the need for chanting.

More goblins rushed to her than Leus; probably since she was a girl. She made

sure to move in a way where they couldn't sneak up behind her, and hacked them down with her dagger. The moment a goblin would try to approach her, it would be sent flying by wind magic, then cut to bits. She was truly skilled at dealing with the monsters.

Leus's affinity was fire. I had taught him how to cast spells without chants, too, but he preferred to fight with his sword over using magic. His style was the old man's single strike style.

I had brought Leus to the old man six months earlier, and Liole took a real liking to him. After that, Leus would come train with me and the old man. He was already strong enough to cleave a goblin in half with a single strike. Although, according to the old man, that was still just beginner level.

As I was lost in thought, Leus finished off the final goblin. They were both covered considerably in goblin goo, but neither were hurt at all.

While they looked like two fierce warriors in battle...

"Sirius!"

"Big bro!"

Once they'd finished fighting, they came running over to me with big smiles on their faces and their tails wagging. They quickly turned from skilled fighters to adorable dogs.

"We dealt with all of them without getting hurt! Leus is covered in a lot of goblin blood, but—"

"That's because you use too much magic! Big bro keeps saying you shouldn't rely too heavily on just magic. I took them all down without any magic at all! Am I amazing, or what?!"

They started to shout at each other. A few head pats shut them up, and they started to wag their tails again.

"Ehehe."

"Hehe."

Although the two of them had started to change considerably since I had first picked them up, their smiles were the same as always.

Emilia's hair had grown longer and now reached all the way to her lower back. Her body was more defined, too—seemed like all that milk drinking had worked, after all. I had kept the fact that I had seen that a secret the whole time, of course. Anyway, she had grown even cuter over the past year. She'd surely be an incredibly beautiful woman when she grew up.

Leus had also grown a lot, both physically and mentally. His speech pattern had become more manly and confident, and he no longer acted based solely on his emotions.

Ever since he had sworn his oath, he had started calling me “big bro.” It wasn't a very fitting title for a master. I had warned him many times to call me something else, but it never worked. It clearly meant a lot to him, so I told him he could keep doing it as long as he used a more proper title in public settings. He wasn't very used to speaking politely, which was something Erina got especially worked up over.

As for me, I... had grown a little taller. Leus had grown so much that he was almost taller than me already. Other than that, I had developed several new spells. I was well on my way to mastering spells from other affinities, as well.

Only one year remained before we had to leave the house. I would continue to train—both the siblings and myself—until the very last day. That way, we could keep our pace up, even when we left for good.

“Are we done for today?”

“Yeah, I think we can call it a day. Let's head home and eat.”

“I wonder what big bro Dii is going to make today.”

Had we brought the goblin parts to an adventurer's guild, we'd get some decent cash from it. It was a bit of a pain to do, though, as we were still too young to register at the guild. In the end, we just left the goblins for other monsters to deal with.

I reviewed the fight with the two of them as we headed home.

Once we had returned, Leus went off to get bathed and changed, while Emilia and I headed for the living room. Erina was resting on the couch. She instantly tried to get up to greet us, but I held my hand out to stop her.

“We’re back, Erina. Please, rest.”

“I’m sorry. I’m glad you’re back safe.”

“These two are naturals, so it went fine. How are you feeling today?”

“My body feels a little heavy, but it’s not a problem.”

Erina’s condition had worsened quite a lot over the past six months. She used to wait for us in the hallway, but now she seemed to get tired simply from the walk to the entrance hall from the living room. She spent most of her time sitting or laying down. I had told her not to come greet us anymore, and to leave the chores to the other servants.

“What are you going to do after lunch, Sirius?”

“I was planning on bringing Leus over to Liolo’s again. Will you be teaching today too, Erina?”

“Yes. I’d like to borrow Emilia for a while after lunch.”

“Got it. I’ll go change, then. Be right back, Sirius.”

Emilia headed over to her room to change, and Erina looked over at me with a smile.

“She sure has grown fast. I feel like I just made her new clothes, and they already look small on her.”

“Yeah. She’s turning into a woman real fast. I’m sorry you have to keep sewing. I’m sure it must be tiring.”

“Not at all. It reminds me how fast they’re growing, after all. I’m just sitting when I sew, so it’s no problem. It’s one of my favorite things to do.”

She glanced up at me with a smile, as if to say “that includes your clothes, too.” I smiled back.

After she had changed into her maid outfit, Emilia came running back into the living room and bowed politely.

“Welcome home, Sirius. Let me take your luggage.”

She removed my weapon belt for me. I didn’t really need help for that, but she was practicing her servant duties, so I didn’t want to say anything.

She wanted to be a servant like Erina and Noel, so whenever she wasn't out training with me, she was at home learning from Erina. Doing both types of harsh training had to be tiring, but I had never heard her complain once.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. I was just thinking about how much you’ve grown.”

“Indeed. You undid the belt perfectly, and your bow was flawless.”

“Oh my! Thank you very much!”

She instantly blushed at the compliments. That was more like her. I patted her head and nodded in satisfaction.

“You’ll be better than Noel in no time. Oh, maybe I shouldn’t have said that out loud.”

There was a sudden crash behind us. Noel, who had been preparing lunch, had dropped what she was holding. She stared at us in shock as silence filled the room.

“I-It’s okay Big sis! I’m no good unless I’m with Sirius, so I can’t be a good servant around anyone else like you can!”

“H-Haha... right... You still can’t beat big sis... right?”

It was a sad sight—a woman in her 30s needed a child to console her. Classic Noelism.

“If only you weren’t such an airhead, you’d be perfect too.”

I heard Erina whisper quietly to herself.

After lunch, Leus and I headed over to the old man’s. I left Leus with him and headed over to a nearby hill to practice my magic.

“Hahaha!”

“Ahh, damnit!”

With the sound of them training in the background, I started to use one of my new spells for long-range shooting.

I had fired my fair share of long-range rifles for assassinations in my day. The

longest distance one of those could shoot had been about two thousand meters, but I was aiming at a target that was twice as far away.

I was on one knee, imagining a sniper rifle, when I fired. It didn't hit the bullseye, but it did hit the target.

Normally, hitting the target from that distance would have been impossible, regardless of the weapon; but this was a world of magic. The only limit was your imagination, really.

“Hahaha! What’s wrong, little one?!”

“What?! That’s cheating!”

As for the scope, I was using a specially made mana tool I’d finally been able to create about six months earlier. It was made of wood, and had a magic circle inside that used water for magnification. There were no telescopes in this world, so it was my own personal design. Apparently, mana tool creation was a specific class at school, so I was looking forward to that.

I kept firing a few powerful long-range shots. After a few minutes, I finally hit the bullseye.

“You’re still standing? How about this?!”

“B-Big bro, save me!”

A normal bullet would have to deal with wind resistance and direction, but that wasn't a problem for magic. I had developed magic that was clearly superior to normal firearms in every way.

“Hahaha!”

“Eeek!”

It seemed like Leus had lost, so I called it a day.

“B-Big bro...”

“Oh, there you are. The little one managed to fight me at 30 percent of my strength today!”

Leus was lying on the ground, heavily beaten. The old man was laughing next to him.

I reached down and patted Leus's head, then picked up the wooden sword he'd dropped.

"Good work, Leus. I'll punish this crazy old man for you."

"Hmph! How rude! I'm just helping the little scamp grow!"

"You were laughing at him after beating him!"

"Well, I had fun! I couldn't help myself!"

"Crazy old man!"

I used "Boost" and charged at him. I used some powers I normally didn't use against him to win. For some reason, that only made him laugh harder before he collapsed. During breakfast the next day, I suddenly had a fun idea.

"Let's go out on a picnic."

"Picnic? With who?"

"Everyone, of course! We'll all bring packed lunches and have a good time!"

"Good idea!"

The kids were excited about that, of course; a certain cat also joined in their cheering, as if she was one of them. Dii quickly started talking about what food he'd cook for the lunches. Erina simply shook her head.

"I'm afraid I'll stay here and watch the house. Everyone else should go ahead and have a grand time. I apologize."

"What?! We can't leave you here alone."

"It won't be any fun without you!"

"I'm sorry... I want to go, but I'm not really able to walk well."

"Don't worry, I've got something for you."

I revealed a wooden chair with a strap for my back. If Dii and I took turns carrying her in the chair, she wouldn't have to walk at all.

"Oh my... well, now I can't say no."

"Good! Let's all go have a fun picnic!"

“Yaay! A picnic!”

“I can’t wait!”

The kids seemed especially excited, as they rarely got breaks from their training. Seeing them act like normal kids put a big smile on my face. I made a mental note to increase the amount of time they had to play.

“Well, then, let’s get ready. Dii and Noel, you guys handle the food. Emilia and Leus, gather some carpets that we can sit on. Erina, you go ahead and rest.

“Okay, let’s go guys!”

“Let’s go!”

Everyone rushed off to handle their jobs, and Erina and I were left alone as I adjusted her chair.

“Sirius, why the sudden picnic? We only have one year left to work for your school fees.”

“That’s exactly why—we don’t have much time left, so I want everyone to enjoy themselves.”

We didn’t know what awaited us once we were kicked out. Because of that, I wanted everyone to make lots of fun memories together, like going on a nice picnic.

“And you’ve been getting worse lately, right? I want you to get some fresh air and relax, too.”

I felt like Erina had started rushing due to her poor condition lately. She especially put a lot of effort into training Emilia, so I also wanted to give her some time off.

“Let’s forget all the important stuff for today and just have a fun picnic together.”

“Very well. I’m sorry you had to make this for me.”

“Don’t mention it. It was my pleasure.”

I had Erina get on the chair so I was sure it could sustain her weight.

Our destination was about a 30 minute walk from the house; a nice clearing I’d

seen while flying home one day. It didn't have many monsters and had a beautiful view.

Leus led the group, with me and Erina in her chair behind him. Noel, Emilia, and Dii walked behind us and kept watch. The only monsters that might have shown up were the goblins from the previous day, and we had already dealt with those. We still brought our weapons, regardless, so we would be ready to fight off any stray monsters.

"Sirius, am I heavy?"

"Not at all. How do you feel, Erina?"

"I'm fine. It's strange, though—you're walking a lot, but I barely feel any movement."

"Well, I'm walking carefully on purpose. I'm used to it from a lot of training."

I had spent a lot of time hiking in the mountains with heavy backpacks back in my day.

"I want to train too!"

"You stay ahead and keep watch. The better you do, the less Erina has to worry. So run up there and swing your sword around!"

"Okay, I will! Leave it to me!"

It had occurred to me recently that Leus was kind of an airhead like Noel. I had to make sure I taught him well, so he wouldn't get taken advantage of in the future.

"Whoa! Amazing!"

"I had no idea such a beautiful spot was so close to the house."

The area was filled with flowers and bushes in full bloom. There were nearly no trees in sight, except for one that stood in the middle of the clearing.

I used "Search," just to make sure, and confirmed that there were no monsters in the area.

"Why is there just one single tree here?"

"It must be the master of these parts. The roots must be very strong, so maybe

you should try asking it for a wish.”

“I see! I’ll try!”

“Me too!”

Noel and Leus put their hands on the tree in excitement.

The tree must have been sucking up most of the nutrients from the ground and stealing it from the other trees. That helped the various flowers in the area to bloom.

“We’re here, but it’s a little early for lunch, right?”

“Then let’s play! I’ve brought something fun!”

“We can play?!”

The siblings’ ears and tails stood straight up, like dogs excited to go to the park.

I took out a wooden, disk-shaped toy. There wasn’t any rubber in this world, so I had to settle for sturdy wood.

“What is that? Should I hit it with my sword?”

“Or should I shoot it with my magic?”

“That would destroy it. No, this is called a frisbee. You throw it to someone, and they catch it.”

I threw it to show them. Thankfully, it worked pretty much like a normal one from my world did. There was no one on the other side to catch it, so I knew I had to retrieve it after.

“Haah!”

I had been planning to walk over and get it when it fell, but Noel rushed out of nowhere and caught it right before it hit the ground. In all honesty, she had never been good at exercising, but she had just moved really fast.

“What just happened? My body moved by itself!”

She looked at the frisbee in confusion, like a cat that had finally caught the string it had been chasing. It wasn’t just Noel, either—the siblings were both

glued to the frisbee. Normally, you'd throw it to each other, but seeing them stare at it like dogs made me feel like teasing them a little. I threw it into the air.

"There! Go get it!"

"Ahh!"

Both of them rushed off after the frisbee. I hadn't actually expected them to catch up to it, but their training really had paid off. Emilia quickly caught up to the frisbee and grabbed it mid-air.

"Wow, good job! Now throw it bac—"

"Sirius!"

Before I could finish, Emilia had rushed up to me and placed the frisbee in my hand.

"Throw it again, please!"

"Hurry up and throw it, Big bro! I'll definitely catch it this time!"

They were clearly having fun, so I threw it even harder this time. Even a well-trained dog would have struggled to catch it at that speed, but the two of them had grown very strong. They quickly chased after the frisbee, then brought it back to me.

"More, Big bro! Do it again!"

"Let me catch it this time, please!"

Huh. Is this how people played with frisbees...?

"A-All right..."

Suddenly, Noel was next to me, glaring at me.

Each time I threw it, she chased after the frisbee like a real cat. Maybe she really had some feline instincts in her, after all.

"Sirius, what's going on? I—ahh! There it goes again!"

"Big sis, don't hog it all to yourself!"

"You can throw it weak for big sis Noel, but throw it harder for us please!"

“What’s that supposed to mean?! I’ll get serious now! I’ll show you how strong I am!”

And so, I repeatedly threw the frisbee while the three of them chased after it.

“I guess you don’t really need me to do this. You guys take turns throwing it to each other instead.”

“No!”

Why not? It was time to get serious. I used “Boost” and tossed the frisbee really hard.

“Guys, it’s lunch time.”

“All right!”

Erina called out to us. Two sets of wolf ears and one set of cat ears twitched in response. We all gathered up and opened the lunches Dii had prepared for us. We started to eat after a short prayer. Emilia handed me one of her sandwiches and something to drink right away.



She refused to eat anything before I did. I felt it was unnecessary, but she was adamant about it.

“It’s delicious. It could use a bit more seasoning, but it’s definitely not bad.”

“Really?!”

Emilia’s tail started to wag like crazy. It did taste a bit different from Dii’s cooking—had she made that one?

“Yeah. I like this stuff too, you know? But, come on, don’t just sit there. Eat up.”

“Okay! Phew, it went well.”

“You worked hard, huh, Emilia?”

Emilia smiled brightly as she took a bite of her own sandwich.

Except for a small incident where Leus choked on his sandwich, it was a nice and peaceful picnic.

After we ate, we spent some time admiring the beauty of nature.

The demi-humans all rushed off to take a nap near the river. They had run so much while they’d played with the frisbee, it was to be expected that they were tired. Dii sat near them with his sword to keep watch, just in case.

As for me, I rested my head on Erina’s lap.

“Hehe.”

“You seem happy.”

She was gently patting my head with a motherly smile. She had gotten a few more wrinkles over the years, but that smile was the same as always.

“I am. You’ve grown so big, and we’ve received more members in our little family. I couldn’t be happier.”

“I see. Good. I want to keep making more fun memories like this together.”

I slowly drifted off in the comfort of Erina’s warmth.

“With you around, we definitely will. For now, just relax.”

“Thank you, I will.”

As I was lulled to sleep, I could hear Erina’s familiar humming in the background. It was the same song she’d been humming since I was just a baby. The melody put me at ease, and I quickly dozed off.

We only had one year left at the house, but things were going well. We had saved up a lot of money for the school fee already, and we trained on a daily basis.

Sadly, the world wasn’t a very kind place—there would always be pitfalls in the road. And, half a year later, the time for a terrible pitfall had come.

Chapter 4: A Pure Love

Six months remained until we were to be kicked out.

It had become the snowflake moon season, which was pretty much identical to winter from my world. During the cold days, we relied on mana tool heaters for warmth.

By the time the winter was over, we would no longer be staying in this house.

I would go to school, but I was worried about what would happen to my students. At first, the plan had been to have Noel take care of them; but they had said they wanted to work in the city my school was in so they could be close to me.

I couldn't say no to that, so I'd continued their harsh training to make sure they could take care of themselves.

Noel was going to return home to her old village. It was very poor, and the reason she'd left home as a kid was because there would be one mouth less to feed. But, according to rumors in town, their village was doing better, thanks to the new feudal lord in the area. That's why she'd decided to go home. Dii was going to go with her. As an old adventurer, he enjoyed traveling to new places. With his great cooking, he'd be able to stay anywhere without any problems. Those two would be just fine.

As for Erina...

Leus and I were sparring in the garden when it happened.

"Big bro! Ouch, ouuuch!"

"I got you because you lett your guard down."

I was punishing Leus with the "Iron Claw" when Emilia's frantic yells came from the house.

“Sirius! Come quick! Hurry!”

The panic in her voice instantly made me realize that it was serious. I sprinted into the house and saw what was wrong right away.

“Help! Erina collapsed!”

Emilia was holding Erina’s body in her arms, and there were tears forming in her eyes.

“Erina! Are you okay?! Erina!”

“I-I’m... fine. I... just need... rest...”

“Emilia, calm down. Take Erina to her bed right away.”

Panic would have only made the situation worse. For starters, we needed to get Erina to her room. I calmly looked down at Emilia.

“Carry Erina to her bed. I can’t examine her here. Got it?”

“O-Okay...”

Emilia was still a little bewildered, but she did as she was told. The ability to carry their master to their room was an important skill for a servant, after all.

I started to analyze her body, and Dii and Noel quickly showed up. They looked worried, though they stayed silent until I had finished my examination. The siblings were both crying in the corner. After using “Scan” on Erina for a bit, I knew the problem.

“It’s time, huh?”

Erina wasn’t hurt, or ill—she was simply getting old. In my old world, it wasn’t unusual for people to live to a hundred. In this world, there was no medical science, so a woman her age was not as strong as one from my world would have been. Also, Erina had struggled with a serious illness earlier in life. She had recovered, but it had taken a serious toll on her body. That was also the reason she wasn’t able to have children of her own. Her lifespan must have been reduced from the strain of it. Healing magic could cure a lot of things, but it couldn’t restore someone’s life. One thing was for certain—she didn’t have much time left.

She had rapidly deteriorated over the past six months. She spent most of her time sitting or lying down, and rarely did any work. Even so, she still took time to show Emilia the proper mannerisms for a servant, and endured the pain it caused her frail body. She was doing her best to pass on everything she knew.

“Sirius! Erina will be fine, right?!”

“Do something, Big bro!”

Dii and Noel seemed to understand what was wrong, but the siblings were looking at me for hope. Nothing could cure Erina—neither magic, nor medicine. We just had to pray and hope for a miracle. Sadly, I didn’t believe in miracles, and I wasn’t able to make them happen.

“Don’t... ask the impossible.”

“Erina!”

Erina had regained consciousness, though she still looked as pale as a ghost.

The siblings rushed up to her, and she gently patted their heads as she looked over at me.

“Sirius, you examined me?”

“Yeah, I did.”

“Then you know what’s wrong. Please tell everyone.”

“Are you sure?”

“I’ve made my peace with it. I want everyone to know.”

“Right... that makes sense.”

Erina smiled bitterly. She was ready, so I had to respect her wishes. I looked over at the servants and told them my diagnosis.

“Erina doesn’t have long left. No more than a month or two.”

Dii and Noel looked away in sadness, while the siblings both broke down crying.

“Did you hear that, everyone?”

But Erina kept a smile on her face.

“This is out of our hands. So please get ready for it.”

Erina’s condition only worsened over the next few days. She was bedridden, and needed to be nursed and fed. The only thing she was able to do was to nod and say a few words. The servants would come and sit by her side when they could. It was hard for them to watch her slowly approach death like that.

She didn’t try to hide the fact that her time was running out, probably for the siblings’ sake. They had just gotten over their parents’ death, so having another loved one pass away would be tough for them. That was why she didn’t try to hide the truth, so they had some time together with her to accept it. Despite her weak condition, she still forced herself up to teach Emilia.

“Please don’t push yourself, Erina. You can watch me and give pointers from the bed.”

“I still have many things to teach you before I can leave you with Sirius. Until I’m done with that, I don’t have time to lay down.”

“But, you’re in no condition to...”

“I’m sorry, but please let me be selfish and do this.”

“Okay.”

Even on her deathbed, Erina continued to teach Emilia. She was using the last strength she had to pass on all the knowledge that she could.

Of course, I continued training too, despite the tough circumstances. The siblings continued to train with me, but they were distracted a lot more than usual. Still, exercise was a good way to get some frustration out of their systems.



It was half a month after Erina collapsed.

It was becoming hard for her to eat solid food, so we had to start preparing a new liquid diet for her. The siblings were no longer denying the reality of the

situation, and had started greeting Erina with big smiles. They were trying their best to reassure her.

What could I do for her?

Erina had been there for me since I had been reborn. How could I repay such an incredible debt? I spent my time looking through every book I could find for the tiniest chance at finding something to cure her. It was all in vain, of course. However, I did learn about a certain object that I could try to use. It had terrible properties, as well, but I felt like it was worth a shot.

After I'd received her permission, I headed to several faraway towns and forests in search of the object. It took several days, but I finally got my hands on it and returned home. All that was left was for her to choose when to use it.



It was a month after she had collapsed. That morning started off with a ruckus.

“Good morning!”

“Erina?!”

As everyone woke up, Erina was already in the kitchen preparing food. She was humming and moving around just fine, as if it had all been a dream.

“Are you feeling better?! What’s happening?!”

“I’ll explain it all later. Please, let’s have breakfast.”

She had prepared quite a feast for everyone else, but only had a simple cup of water in front of her own seat.

“You’re not eating, Erina?”

“I’ll explain everything later. Just enjoy the food and don’t mind me.”

Everyone seemed like they had their suspicions, but they put it aside for the time being. It had been a while since they had eaten Erina’s cooking, so they

quickly got caught up in eating.

“How is it, Sirius? I haven’t cooked in a while, so I’m not sure if it’s any good...”

“It’s perfect. Just the way it always has been. I love your cooking.”

“Oh, thank God. I was worried it wouldn’t taste good.”

“It’s delicious, Erina!”

“Hehe, thank you.”

After breakfast, Erina prepared tea for everyone. And then, as everyone started drinking their tea, she dropped a bomb on everyone.

“I’ll die today.”

Everyone froze up and stared at Erina in shock. After a long pause, Noel spoke up.

“Um, could you explain...? What’s going on? This is so sudden...”

“Of course. I might look fine right now, but that’s all thanks to a certain medicine.”

“Medicine? D-Did it cure you?”

“No. This medicine drains the life force of whoever drinks it—no matter how little is left—and gives them great strength for about one day. After that, their life ends. Mine will wear out tonight.”

The “medicine” I had gotten her was an illegal elixir called “life boost.”

It numbed the user’s senses and increased their physical abilities to the max for the duration. It had been used during wars to bring nearly dead soldiers back to the battlefield. As such, it had been deemed illegal due to its horrible effects. Normally, the standar elixir would last no more than a few hours, but I’d tinkered with it and managed to extend the duration to about one day. Now Erina wasn’t feeling any pain and could move around just like normal. Though once the elixir’s effect ran out, she’d die. The reason she hadn’t eaten was simply because she didn’t need to.

“Why would you take something like that?!”

“Yeah, this is too sudden!”

“Even if I didn’t take it, I would only have had days left. So I wanted to have one day where I’m back to normal with all of you instead.”

The room went silent after that response. Everyone was at a loss, so they started looking toward me for answers instead. But I had been the one who had gotten her the elixir in the first place, and had left the choice to take it to her.

“This is what Erina wants. I think we should respect her wishes. So, after work, let’s have some tea again.”

“Thank you. Okay, everyone, let’s start with cleaning! Let’s split up and finish it quickly!”

All that Erina had wanted was to do chores with the others like she used to. They cleaned the house, did the laundry, prepared some lunch, and continued with their usual housework like any other day. The other servants seemed a little bewildered at first, but when they saw Erina skip around the house and do her chores, they quickly got excited to join.

“Emilia, Leus, come—I’ll pat you.”

“Yaaay!”

“Noel, Dii, I made some cookies. Why don’t we have some tea and eat them?”

“Now we’re talking!”

“Thank you.”

“Sirius, do you want to rest your head in my lap?”

“Yeah, I’d love that.”

She used the remainder of her life force to enjoy the day with her family. After we had finished eating dinner, Erina brought everyone to her room. She lay down in bed and made sure we were all there.

“I had so much fun today. I don’t think I have much time left, so I want to say something to each one of you before I go.”

With a loving smile, Erina started to call us over to leave us with some final words. She told Noel to remember her training and to believe in herself. If she

did, she'd do a fine job. She told Dii to work on his speaking skills so he could do better on his own. Leus was told to work on his etiquette, and Emilia was told to use what Erina had taught her to support me. Everyone just stayed silent, crying as they listened to Erina, but I couldn't control my feelings any longer.

“Why...”

“What's wrong, Sirius?”

“Why are you... smiling?”

She continued to smile as she replied, of course, but that made me feel angry. She had basically just told people how to improve in their jobs, nothing more. Was that really all she had to say? Was that really the final thing she wanted to leave us with?

“Erina... is that really all you want to say?”

“I'm sorry, did I do something wrong?”

Erina looked bewildered. It was obvious she hadn't understood my anger, but I just couldn't stop myself. She had done something wrong. Erina wasn't just a maid who was there to pass on her knowledge—she was family. I wanted her to act like that. Like the kind mother figure she had always been to me...

“True. You're very suited for a motherly role. I've felt like you're my mom many times myself, after all.”

“Oh?! Th-Thank you very much...”

“Haha, you two sound like parents!”

“At my age? Shouldn't I at least be their big brother or something?”

“In that case, I'd be your mother, Sirius. How wonderful...”

Of course.

The reason she was acting like just a servant was my fault. If I had just spent more time acting like a kid my age and allowed her to dote on me, instead of acting like an adult, then...

“If I hurt you in some way, I'm terribly sorry. Please, Sirius, let me say my goodbyes...”

“Of course. But I want to hear what you really have to say, Mom.”

She twitched in surprise, but quickly shook her head and smiled wryly.

“Please don’t make fun now. Your mother was the mistress. I’m simply your loyal servant, nothing more... I’m not your mother.”

“Yes, you are. I have two. Mom gave birth to me and loved me, but you raised me. You are my mother, Erina—that, I’m sure of.”

“I-I am...?”

“That’s right. You’ve always been a mother to me. So I don’t want you to pass on your knowledge as a maid now. I want to hear what you, as my mother, has to say to her family. Please...”

Suddenly, there were tears streaming down Erina’s face.



They were tears of joy, and she made no effort to wipe them away.

“A-Are you sure?”

“Of course. We’re family, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. Actually, if you don’t tell us how you really feel, I’d be mad at you forever.”

“Sirius... Oh, Sirius... I don’t want you to be mad with me, so I’ll do as you say.”

The others watched us in surprise, though I felt good. I should have called her mom much earlier. I should have let her dote on me more. How could I not have realized this until now...?

“Everyone, could I please have a bit more of your time?”

Erina was finally speaking from her heart.

“Leus, you have to make sure you chew your food properly. I’ve told you this several times before. You need to chew the food and take your time tasting it, or else the person who made it will feel bad.”

“Wh-Why do you need to bring that up now...”

“Because this is important! And you need to work on your manners. If you’re seen acting rude around Sirius, you might get him in trouble. Do you understand?”

“Y-Yeah... I mean yes!”

“Dii... I only have one thing to say to you.”

“Yes?”

“It’s fine to be a little shy, but don’t let it turn to cowardice. Be proud and stick your chest out. These kids look up to you, so be a good role model for them.”

“I-I’ll remember that.”

“Noel... Oh, Noel, my cute, ditzzy little sister. You could really be a handful, did you know that?”

“Uh... ouch?!”

“What’s the matter? I called you cute!”

“Ouch.”

“I’m joking. It’s okay, you’re perfect like this. Please stay the same cute and honest girl—don’t let anything change that.”

“Yeah... I will.”

“Emilia, remember your training. I’ve asked this many times before, but you still haven’t changed your mind about your future, right?”

“I haven’t. I want to stay by Sirius’s side.”

“I see. Don’t push yourself, though. If something happens to you, you’ll just worry Sirius.”

“Okay. I’ll be... careful.”

“Good. Take good care of yourself. You’ll need to be at your best to support him, after all.”

“Yeah... I will...”

“Sirius... I have nothing left I need to say to you.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You can do anything on your own, can’t you?”

“Not anything.”

“No, you can. I’m your mother, and I’m so proud of you. I know you can.”

“Well, if you put it that way...”

“Just like the mistress said—please be strong and live your own life. Don’t let anyone hold you back.”

“That is something I’m good at, so don’t worry about it.”

“That’s good to hear. I have... one final request. If I may...”

“Of course.”

“Can you... hold my hand?”

“Of course.”

“Can you... call me ‘Mom’ one more time?”

“I’ll say it as many times as you want, Mom.”

“One more time...”

“Mom.”

“Once more...”

“Mom.”

“Hehe. This is the first time I’ve seen you cry in your whole life. Are you... crying for my sake?”

“Of course I am...”

“Say, Sirius. I couldn’t be happier.”

“I’m glad.”

“The only regret I have is that I won’t be there to watch you grow.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s all right. I’m happy. There were a lot of hard times along the way, but I had my beloved family there with me. That’s why I couldn’t be happier now.”

“I’m happy too. I’m so glad I got to grow up with you, Mom.”

“I love you, Sirius.”

“I love you too, Mom.”

“Thank you. That’s all I needed to hear.”

“Thank you...”

Suddenly, I found myself standing in an empty, white space. I had just been lying in bed holding Sirius's hand, then suddenly I woke up here.

"You're too early!"

Miss Arya?

"That's right. Long time no see!"

It has been far too long. Your son has grown up so well.

"I know, I've been watching. And hey, he's not my son—he's ours."

That's right.

"Don't be so stiff! We're not master and servant anymore, we're both just two mothers talking. Loosen up!"

I appreciate the sentiment, but it's a tough habit to break. Now... where are we?

"Hmm, I don't know! Heaven, I guess?"

Heaven, you say? And we're able to watch Sirius from here?

"That's it? You're not surprised or anything?"

As long as I can watch Sirius, nothing else matters.

"I see. Here, come sit next to me, then. There's a seat that's open for you!"

I don't see chairs or anything. What do you mean?

"It's an expression. Just come, sit, and watch Sirius."

Of course. Ah, he's so cute.

"He's quite the ladykiller, huh? He's the first man to ever make you this obsessed, that's for sure!"

I've been obsessed with him since the moment I first held him in my arms.

"Well, I've been obsessed with him since before he was even born! Hah! I win."

No—with all due respect, no one loves Sirius more than me.

“I do!”

No, I love him more.

“This is going nowhere... Hmm, how about we say we love him equally, then?”

No, I love him more.

“Ugh... you’re the same as always, huh?”

So are you.

“Well, I had no reason to change, did I?! Anyways, Erina... at this point, all we can do is watch, but I have something to tell you.”

I’m listening.

“Thank you. You did good. You can rest now.”

Thank you. I was truly happy.

| Sirius |

The next day, we headed to the spot where we’d had a picnic a month ago. We decided to make Erina’s grave there, among the beautiful flowers. In this world, a funeral meant that only the closest relatives got together to mourn. The only exception to this was with nobles.

The deceased would be cremated, and their remains would then be crushed. This was to prevent the remains from reanimating into a skeletal monster. We quietly buried Erina’s remains in the box she’d kept hidden with my mother’s picture.

“Big bro, is this good?”

Leus set down the gravestone, and we carved her name in the stone with my mirthil knife. It didn’t feel right just carving in her name, though.

“I’d like to leave a message in her memory on the grave. Does anyone have any ideas?”

“Hmm, something about family...”

“And her loyalty.”

“Our beloved Erina?’ Something like that?”

“Yes, I’d definitely like something like that too.”

“Hmm. How about this, then?”

I took everyone’s suggestions and put them all together. After getting everyone’s approval, I etched it into the stone.

In my old world, I had never met my parents. My master had not really been a parent—he had been more like a teacher. When I had died, I had never known what the warmth of a loving parent felt like. Erina taught me how that felt. I thought I had lost the ability to cry after everything I’d been through in my old life, but the thought of her brought tears to my eyes once more.

What a nostalgic feeling. The only thing that was able to make me cry now was the strong affection I felt for Erina, my mother. Her honest and pure love still lived within my heart. She had always been there to support me since the day I had been reborn.

Goodbye, Mom. Thank you for having taught me what it felt like to be loved like this.

Please rest in peace.

Her gravestone read:

Here lies Erina—loved by her family, trusted by all.



Epilogue

| Emilia |

After Erina passed away, I was stricken with sorrow.

I knew I shouldn't be depressed for too long, but her memory haunted me. I would remember her upon any little detail, and the tears wouldn't stop. I couldn't help it. Erina had been like a second mother to me and Leus. She even gave me a purpose by teaching me the joy of serving someone. I was prepared, like I had promised her. Even so, when she had been cremated, and her body was gone, we had all wept—even Dii.

In the midst of that, Sirius had gathered her bones in a box and cleaned her room out. Even when faced with such sadness, he had been there to support us.

When Dii started to make some mistakes in the kitchen because he was having a hard time, Sirius was there to motivate him.

“Dii, I know you're sad, but don't let that reflect in your cooking. Do you want to be a cook that makes others feel your sadness when they eat your food?”

“I...”

“Delicious food always puts a smile on people's faces. Aim to be a cook that can cure such sadness through your food—even your own. Plus, you have something you need to tell her, don't you?”

“Yes!”

His face had been as expressionless as ever, but he didn't mess up again after that.

And, in the garden, Leus and big sis Noel were running as fast as they could.

“Erinaaaa!”

“Ahh!”

“There you go! Get it all out of your system! Shout at the top of your lungs!”

“Erinaaaa! I’ll work hard, I promise!”

“Me too! I’ll work really hard! Thank you, Erina!”

“That’s it, keep shouting! I’ll make you guys pudding after this, so keep it up!”

“Pudding?!”

Both of them had collapsed from exhaustion after that, but they’d looked very satisfied. Once they had recovered a bit, they happily ate the pudding Sirius made. They still looked a little bit sad, but Leus and big sis Noel seemed to be feeling much better now.

What didn’t make sense to me was Sirius’s reaction. He was the one who should have been the most hurt by Erina’s passing—how could he have remained so strong for all of us despite that sadness? I couldn’t help myself, so I asked him.

He patted my head and said, “I am very sad, but I still feel her love. Everything Erina’s given me has made me stronger. So, instead of being stuck in the moment and feeling sad, I want to head forward. That’s what she would have wanted. Don’t you think that’s better?”

He smiled just like he always did.

Ah, what an incredible man. I wanted to follow him and support him forever. Whenever I woke up in the morning, I’d put on the maid outfit Erina had sewn for me. A well-groomed servant reflected well on their master, so they always needed to make sure they looked their best.

The snow outside had already started to melt, revealing the green grass below. That meant that the snowflake moon season was ending; but, more importantly, it meant that we didn’t have much time left. It would be sad to leave the house, but I’d be fine as long as I was by Sirius’s side. There was nowhere else I’d have rather been in the whole world, after all.

And once he started school, he’d surely become an even more impressive man. I had to make sure I didn’t fall too far behind him. After I had changed, I fixed

my hair. Sirius had complimented my hair—he'd told me he thought it was pretty, so I made sure it was perfect.

After I'd finished getting ready, I did one final check.

Hair, check.

Clothes, check.

Smile... a little stiff, but it would do.

Between housework, training, and tending to Sirius, I didn't have the time to be sad. Also, the words that Erina had said to me during our last class together stuck in my mind.

"No matter how strong Sirius is, and no matter how well he can do on his own, all people need a place to call home. Even if you feel like there's nothing you can do, please support him. Become someone he feels safe and at home with."

That was the final task that Erina had left me with. And it was just what I'd wanted, too. No matter what, I'd be there with Sirius to support him.

I'd take it from here, Erina—please rest and watch over us.

I tapped my cheeks, then headed out the door.

"Let's work hard for Sirius today, too!"

And so, my day had begun.

| Sirius |

It had been a few days since Mom had died.

The servants had started to smile again. Slowly, but surely, they were trying to put their sadness aside. I thought it would take them longer, but they were already starting to go back to normal. Although Erina had given them over a month to prepare, it just showed how strong they all were. I'd gotten used to loss from my old life, and was able to focus on life like usual despite the pain. It didn't mean that I wasn't feeling sad, but I had to focus on training and guiding

my students. I would be setting a bad example if I were to lie around all day being sad. We had to accept Mom's death and move forward.

After lunch, I sat down in a chair I'd prepared in the garden and watched over my servants.

"Noel, the aps are looking ready for picking now."

"Really?! Can you bake something with them for me?!"

"Of course."

At first, both Dii and Noel had made some mistakes during their work, due to the sadness of losing Mom, but that had stopped after a few days. Now, they were out in the garden and talking about picking aps together, as usual. Erina had wanted to see Dii and Noel get together. It was obvious that the two of them had feelings for each other, but no one had made a move. Erina just found that charming, but I wanted to do something about it. Mom had left Dii with some pretty fitting words for this, so this was a perfect time to give him a push. I decided to do my best to help him confess.

"Here you are, Sirius."

"Thanks."

Emilia came over with some tea. Her movements were so professional now that she really reminded me of Mom. She really had taken in everything Mom had taught her.

"Um, is something wrong? Do I look strange?"

"Ah, sorry. I was just thinking about what school will be like."

I didn't want to admit that I'd been thinking of Mom, so I lied.

"I don't know, but I'm sure you'll do well. You'll surely rise to the top in no time."

Emilia started to blush, for some reason, as she pictured me at school.

"Absolutely! You'll knock all those losers off their pedestals when you go there, Big bro!"

Leus, who had been sleeping in the grass, suddenly jumped up and joined in.

“How do you guys see me, exactly...?”

It was good to see them back to normal, at least.

School, huh? Thanks to everyone’s hard work, I had enough money to pay for the school fees now. I wasn’t really focused on becoming the best, or anything—I was just excited to see what kind of studies we’d be doing there. It would be sad to leave the house I’d grown up in, but I did want to experience more of this world than just our own little paradise.

I didn’t know why, but I had been given a new chance when I had been reborn in a new world. And, like my mothers had wanted, I planned to live for myself. I wanted to teach my students, go to school, travel the world, and learn.

“Do you want some more tea, Sirius?”

“Yes, please.”

We still had a little time before we had to leave, though. For now, we could just relax.

“Emilia.”

“Yes?”

“Leus.”

“What’s up, Big bro?”

“Let’s work hard together.”

“Yes!”

“Of course!”

They both smiled in response. Emilia’s smile was warm and loving, just like Mom’s, and Leus’s was goofy and mischievous. I looked forward to spending my time growing along with my two students.

Servants, Past and Future

When I was born, I already had three servants there to care for me.

First, there was Erina. She was my maid, but—most importantly—she loved and cared for me like a mother. Next, there was Noel. She was full of life, and always made everyone else in the room smile. Finally, there was Dii. He was quiet and a bit awkward, but always supported everyone quietly from the sidelines.

They were originally my mother's servants; but, when she'd died, they were there to care for me instead. Even after Mom had been stripped of her title and wealth and sent off, the servants insisted on joining her in this house. She wasn't able to pay them, but they stayed. They were incredibly loyal, which was also why they wanted to serve me after Mom had passed away.

Erina had been struck by a terrible disease called mana pollution, though I had managed to cure her. Day by day, the servants grew more attached to me, and I to them.

One day, as we were drinking tea together after lunch, I asked them all a question.

“How did you all meet Mom?”

They all looked a bit torn at first. They probably didn't want to hurt me by talking about Mom. I made it clear that I'd be fine, so Erina spoke up.

“I met Miss Arya the day I had been thrown out of the noble house I was serving at the time.”

Apparently, Erina had served a different noble family when she was younger. When she fell ill, though, she was thrown out of the house. Even after she'd recovered, she hadn't been taken back. The illness had taken a toll on her body,

and there were some permanent effects. As a result, she couldn't work as well as before.

With nothing but a small suitcase and some pocket change, she was thrown out. She wandered aimlessly through the nearest town, weak from the aftereffects of illness. Eventually, she had collapsed in an alley.

"Not only had I grown weaker from the illness, but I would also never be able to have children of my own. But, as I was lost in despair, a girl came up to me."

That girl had been Mom. At that time, Mom had been the daughter of a noble family—for her to address a mere commoner like that was unheard of.

"Hey, are you okay? What are you doing?"

Mom was 10 at the time—old enough to know that speaking to strangers could be dangerous. Yet she didn't hesitate at all when she called out to Erina.

"She told me later that it was fate that led her to talk to me. I don't know if she was just kidding, but it really did feel like fate to me."

Erina quickly noticed that Mom was a noble, and warned her not to talk to her. She had tried to leave, but Mom spoke up.

"Now I'm even more sure that you're not going to hurt me, so there's no problem! I want to know what happened to you—how did you end up here all alone? Could you please tell me?"

The girl had refused to back down, so Erina told her everything. After she'd heard Erina's story, Mom clapped her hands together, then put her hand on Erina's shoulder.

"Hmm, I see. Got it. Be my servant, then!"

"Excuse me?"

"You've served nobles in the past, so you must be skilled. Become my servant!"

"B-But like I said, I'm not able to work like I used to..."

"You're not sick anymore, so it shouldn't get any worse. Just work as hard as possible; that should be enough!! Besides... for some reason, I really want you as my servant!"

Mom continued to try to convince Erina to come home with her. She kept at it until her bodyguards caught up with her.

“She was a strange and strong-willed girl, but hearing her say she needed me really saved me that day.”

Of course, her family was against bringing in a commoner off the street. At the same time, they didn’t want to go against their cute daughter’s wishes, so they accepted her as their servant.

“Arya was still just a young, vulnerable girl, but she would run off whenever she had the chance to. I really had my hands full chasing after her when she did. But, I must admit, it was a lot of fun.”

The way she’d found Erina made Mom seem like a really reckless girl, but she apparently also had a careful side. She could spot anyone who seemed fishy in an instant and ignored them.

She was great at recognizing who her allies and her enemies would be with a single glance.

“A few years after that, as I’d grown used to Miss Arya’s sporadic behavior, we went out to a nearby town together. As we walked down the main street of the shopping district, she spotted Dii setting up a small camp by himself a little ways away.”

“She really surprised me that day.”

Apparently, Dii’s adventuring partner at the time had just retired due to an injury, and Dii had been contemplating whether to continue solo, or retire as well.

He had a dream of becoming a chef, but he had no connections who could help him get started. He had given up on it and spent time practicing and experimenting with cooking at his own camp, instead.

“Something smells good!”

“Who are you?”

Few people came up to him because of the look in his eyes, apparently. He was even more awkward back then than he was now, so that wasn’t too surprising.

Despite that, Mom had happily walked up to him and wanted to try his cooking.

“I’m Arya! Something smells really good. Can I try some, please?”

“Miss Arya! You can’t eat that! What if it’s poisoned, or—”

“Who would put poison in their own food, silly?! Hey, you—is there poison in this?”

“No... of course not. That would be rude to the food.”

“See? He clearly sees the value in good food! We can trust him! So, can I please try some?”

“Suit yourself.”

Dii didn’t act like a commoner normally would around a noble—he treated Mom like any other stranger. She didn’t care at all, though, and eagerly dug in to Dii’s cooking. After tasting it, she furrowed her brow.

“Hmm... it’s not bad, but there’s something missing. You seem to know what you’re doing, so I expected this to taste better.”

“If I had more ingredients, it would.”

He was fairly poor, so he didn’t have much to work with. Obviously, Mom’s comments upset Dii a bit.

She simply smiled and responded, “So if you have more ingredients, you can make something really good?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay! Want to be my servant?”

“Miss Arya!”

“Huh?”

And that was how Dii became Mom’s cook. Her family was more guarded against letting Dii in, at first, but they eventually gave in after they’d tasted his cooking.

“I was a little wary of him myself at the start. But, as I got to know him, I realized how kind and honest he is. Miss Arya must have noticed it right away.”

“I can’t thank the mistress enough for taking a useless guy like me in, and letting me cook for her.”

Because he finally had a way of making his dream come true, Dii was excited to serve Mom. Mom and Erina also helped him a lot with his social anxiety, which he was grateful for.

“He truly has come a long way now. Back then, he was quite a mess.”

“I’m sorry.”

He bowed his head awkwardly, though I could tell his eyebrows were furrowed slightly. It was rare for him to visibly show any emotion, so that meant he was really serious. Mom continued to grow, although she still acted the same way.

A few years after they had taken Dii in, she snuck out of the house, and Erina went out to look for her.

“When I finally found her, she had gotten in a quarrel with a slave trader. She was shielding Noel behind her back.”

“Noel, you used to be a slave?”

“H-Haha... yeah, I did...”

She laughed like usual, but her eyes were different—I could see the pain behind them.

“I’m sorry, Noel. That must have brought up some painful memories.”

“It’s fine. I’m good now. Hey, Erina, remember how cool Miss Arya was that day?”

“Indeed. I really shouldn’t commend such reckless behavior, but she refused to back down when she talked with the slave trader.”

When Erina tried to get in between the two of them to understand what was going on, Mom just shouted, “Good, Erina! Go back home and get my coin purse!”

“Could you at least explain what’s going on?”

“I’m buying her!”

As soon as she saw the scared demi-human hiding behind Mom’s back, Erina

knew what was going on. She also knew there was no use in talking her out of it, so she headed home to retrieve her purse. Mom threw her money at the slave trader.

“She shouted at the man to never show his face near her again, then threw in an extra gold piece. That’s how Noel joined us. At first, she was really frightened, and wouldn’t talk to anyone but the mistress.”

“You’d look at me, say I’m scary, then run away.”

“I-I couldn’t help it! Everything was scary to me back then. And you really were scary back then, you know Dii?! Now I like you, though! Y-You know...a-as a colleague...”

“I see.”

Noel frantically tried to cover her slip of the tongue, but I could see Dii’s lips curve up into a smile. The two of them seemed to be having a little moment, though Erina ignored it and recounted Mom’s next words.

“I bought you, so now you have to listen to what I say! So, here's your first order—you’re my little sister now!”

“O-Okay...”

“You need to address her with more respect! Sister or not, you’ll be serving the mistress from now on. I’ll help teach you some proper manners.”

“Eeek!”

“It’s okay, Erina won’t hurt you. You don’t need to hide behind my back. Come on out!”

“Miss Arya, dinner is read—”

“Eeek!”

Even Erina scared her at the time; so, when Dii had first shown up, Noel had panicked and ran away. This had made him feel pretty sad, apparently.

“But after spending more time with Miss Arya, Noel slowly, but surely, opened up. That is how she became the handful that you see today.”

“Who are you calling a handful?! I helped with work, didn’t I?!”

“You seemed to be working hard.”

“True—you did try hard, and your love for Miss Arya was very clear. But you also broke more plates than I can count, for starters. The mistress might have laughed it off, but we were the ones who had to clean up after you. I have told you a thousand times already, you need to be collected and calm when working!”

“Uhh, when did this turn into a lecture...?”

The lecture continued until Erina got it all out of her system.

“Thank you all for telling me about Mom. It means a lot to me.”

“You don’t need to thank us. We’re your servants, so we’ll do anything you need from us.”

After Erina had finished venting, I decided that was enough about Mom for the day. Talking about her too much might bring up a lot of memories for the servants, and I didn’t want to make them feel too upset by telling me everything in one sitting.

Hearing how they all met was plenty for now.

“Sob. I’ll go clean now...”

Noel dragged herself out of the room to clean, clearly still recovering from the harsh lecture she'd just received. Dii looked at her as she walked away, then turned to us.

“Erina. I’ll go help her clean.”

With that, he followed after Noel.

“Is he going to comfort her?”

“Yes. Whenever I scold her, he goes to console her. They have been like that ever since Noel finally opened up to Dii for the first time.”

“I see. That makes sense. He’d never get mad at her, so I can see why she took a liking to him.”

“Indeed. And he just couldn’t bear to see her sad, so he’d always try to make things better. Honestly, I’ve never seen Dii get angry at anyone. He’s quite a patient man.”

Especially so when it came to Noel. If she said she was hungry, he'd always go and make a light snack for her. After he learned that she loved the pudding I made, he started to work hard to memorize the recipe, just so he could make it for her.

"They're both in love with each other, don't you think?"

"You've noticed it too?"

"I think not noticing it would be impossible. I guess neither of them have confessed yet, though."

Erina shook her head with a wry smile.

"I love both of them like family, so I'd love to see them together. I've given them plenty of jobs together where they'd be all alone, but..."

Noel still had some trauma from her days in slavery. Apparently, she felt like she would just hold her lover back, so she didn't want to confess to anyone. Trauma like that didn't go away so easily.

And Dii told himself that he had to focus on being there for his master, and that he didn't have time to worry about love. It was clearly an excuse to cover up for his anxiety. Unless they had kids of their own right away, a girlfriend wouldn't be much of a hindrance to his work.

"They do seem happy with how things are now, though. Just make sure you don't push them too hard."

She had been trying to find ways to bring the two of them together for a while, but nothing had worked so far. She'd opted to watch over them with a smile instead.

"I see. So, how did the two get so close? You said Noel was terrified of everyone at the start, right?"

"To sum it up in one word: food."

"This is Noel we're talking about, so it seems plausible that it really was that simple."

She explained a little further—after six months, Noel had started to smile again, though she still ran away from Dii. She didn't scream anymore, but she

was still frightened.

One day, he tried to get closer to her by giving her some bread that he'd baked. Mom had been the one who gave him the idea.

"Of course, that didn't work at first. She just became more suspicious of him, which really hit him hard."

It made sense. She was still really scared at that time, so anything might have seemed suspicious to her. Just like a scared animal who needed to warm up to humans again, it would simply take time. Dii tried changing his strategy.

"Next, he left some food with a note on Noel's bed. He hoped to hear her opinion on it."

Of course, Erina or Mom were the ones who actually left it there, in order to make sure they didn't spook her. At first, she'd ignored it completely. He kept at it, though, so she eventually ate some and started to write replies.

"At first, she simply just wrote things like 'it's good.' That alone made Dii happy. After they'd continued for a while, they finally got to a point where they could talk together. And, before long, they ended up like this."

While he left the notes, he'd start asking what she wanted to eat next. Then, he'd prepare the dishes she'd asked for. I wanted to ask a bit more about them, but Erina had to get back to work. I left it there.

It made me wonder what they specifically felt for each other.

I wanted to try doing what I could to bring them together. At the same time, though, I wanted to make sure I didn't meddle too much. That's why I went to ask them how they felt.

I found Noel humming happily whilst dusting. She was clearly in a good mood, thanks to Dii's help.

"Huh?! H-How I feel about Dii?! I-I don't... hate him, I guess..."

"I know that much. You're attracted to him, right? I'm asking when it started."

I just said it outright, which made her blush. Hopefully her reason wasn't as simple as, "he gave me food, so I fell in love."

“At first, I was really scared of him and I’d run off. But, after a while, I realized he’s just a nice guy who wants to make good food for me. Then, when we started to talk more, it became clear just how nice he really is. He kept helping me when I did stuff wrong. Before I knew it, I... started to fall for him. Eek, I said it!”

The embarrassment was too much to handle, I guess, because Noel darted off like a spooked cat. She wasn’t done cleaning, so Erina would surely give her another lecture after that. At least she admitted that she’s in love with him. That was all I wanted to hear.

Next, I found Dii and asked him the same question.

“Wh-What made me fall in love with Noel?!”

He looked really bewildered. When I explained that Erina had told me about the two of them, he calmed down a bit and answered.

“At first, I just wanted to see her smile.”

He had only ever seen her look scared, and that made him pity her.

Once he’d finally gotten closer to her, and she’d started to smile around him, it was like he’d been struck by lightning.

“When I saw that smile, I never wanted to look at any other woman again.”

Her smile really took his breath away, and he realized shortly after that he was falling for her.

“Aren’t you going to confess to her?”

“Ugh?! I-I can’t put my own needs ahead of yours, Sirius. I have duties to—

“I don’t mind at all. I’d love to see you guys happy together. Make some babies, you know?”

“B-Babies?! I-I appreciate the sentiment, but wouldn’t that be bad in our current situation?”

We were barely scraping by with the money my “father” was giving us. He really was worried about our quality of life if he were to get together with Noel.

“I’m sorry. You must be exhausted having to work so hard to care for me.”

“Don’t be. I’m happy to serve you, just like I was with your mother. And... I’m

more than happy just working together with Noel.”

“You sure? Are you sure you’re not just scared of confessing?”

“I’m sorry. I just remembered I have some urgent work to do with Erina. Excuse me.”

Then he ran off, just like Noel did. They really were perfect for each other.

So the reason Dii wasn’t confessing was a mixture of fear for my future, as well as his own anxiety. Unless we either suddenly came across a fortune, or he managed to get a hold of his anxiety, it was unlikely he would confess any time soon.

Since we already had our hands full trying to save enough money for my school fees, it would be tough to suddenly improve our financial situation.

Sadly, it seemed I had to set it aside for the time being. They both seemed happy with how things were. And, if either one got too impatient, I’m sure they’d end up confessing at some point. So, just like Erina, I decided to just watch them with a smile.



A few years later, soon after I had saved Emilia and Leus.

The servants had all gathered in the living room to help teach the siblings the basics of what they needed to know in the house.

Suddenly Leus had blurted out, “Big bro Dii, are you and big sis Noel married?”

Silence filled the room, and everyone looked over at Dii and Noel. Not only had it been a bombshell of a question, but he’d skipped dating and gone to marriage.

Noel blushed red, like a tomato. She looked at Dii for help, but he mumbled something about starting dinner and ran away.

Of course, it wasn't a surprise that he did. If he had been able to confess to her under pressure like that, he would have done it a long time ago.

At that point, things had gotten easier for us—we pretty much had the money we needed for school, but maybe he was worried about the future now that we had two more family members to feed.

Also, it had become clear to me that Dii was actually quite the romantic. I had taught him many different ways of confessing to a girl by using the knowledge from my old world, and he had rigorously written them down. I glanced at his notes after, and saw that he had circled “pick her up on a white steed” and “confess your love for her under the stars and give her a ring.”

So—seeing as he wanted a grand and special setting for his confession—doing it randomly when someone asked would ruin the moment for him.

After that, the tomato-faced Noel had darted off in embarrassment too. I explained Noel and Dii's relationship to the siblings.

“How wonderful! I'll cheer for them, as well!”

“I don't get it. Why don't they just get married? I saw them just gazing at each other outside in the garden the other day.”

“Romance is complicated stuff.”

“Indeed. Try not to push them about this too much.”

“No way! To me, it just looks like they're killing themselves by waiting! I'll go talk to big bro Dii!”

Leus ignored us and ran after Dii. He returned in a bit; though, based on the way he was chewing on something, it seemed like Dii had distracted him with some food. Leus happily chewed on whatever it was, and probably forgot all about why he'd gone after Dii in the first place.

“You're not done with your studies yet. You shouldn't just leave whenever you feel like it.”

“And you shouldn't walk and eat at the same time! I've taught you this already!”

“Huh?! I-I was going to talk to big bro Dii about big sis Noel, and...”

Erina scolded Leus, and took his snacking privileges away for the night.

That night, during dinner...

“Um, big bro Dii, I feel like I’ve got a smaller serving of meat than everyone else...”

“You’re imagining things.”

“Look, my bread is much smaller than the others.”

“You’re imagining things.”

“And I clearly have less soup!”

“You’re imagining things.”

“I’m so sorry! I’ll never meddle again, I promise!”

After that, Leus learned about the true wrath of an upset Dii, and never asked about his relationship with Noel again.

Of course, even after that, Dii didn’t confess. I had gotten my hopes up a little bit, since the two of them had been asked so bluntly about it together, but alas.

We had finally gotten to a point where we were saving up a little money for ourselves for once. While it wasn’t much, their relationship wouldn’t have been a problem for us at all.

At that point, I felt like his only excuse was his anxiety holding him back. I decided to talk to him again. Even though I was his master, and getting love advice from a child might have felt strange, I had gained his trust. He also seemed to be more aware of his own confidence issues, and he sat down earnestly to listen to what I had to say.

“Dii, you know what I’m here to talk about, right?”

“Yes...”

“No matter the reason, running off like that was the worst thing you could have done. You clearly hurt her.”

“Th-There’s a good reason, though. I... I’ve ordered a ring for her, and—”

“Wait, really?!”

He explained that he had met an old merchant friend in town and placed an order for a ring with him. He wanted to give Noel the ring when he confessed, so doing it before then would ruin his plan. In this world, it wasn't really normal to give a ring when confessing, so this was something I had taught him.

"But I didn't have enough money at the time. It took a while, but I was finally able to convince him to make it. It's custom made and had to be ordered, so I'm still waiting..."

"I see. That makes sense, then. But even so, simply running away wasn't very nice. It was clear as day that Noel was hoping you'd confess to her there, and you just fled."

"I'm sorry."

"It's still not too late. You can still tell her how you feel, and give her the ring later."

"I... uh..."

He felt so bad for running away that he didn't have the courage to go confess to her that night, after all. He might have looked cold and scary at first glance, but he was actually a really sensitive guy.

The ring was finished a little while after that, but he still hadn't managed to confess.

It seemed like it would be a while before the two of them got together.

Afterword

Hello everyone, my name is Neko Koichi.

Thank you to all those who read my web novel. We finally got it published in book form! Having a book that I wrote printed like this is truly a dream come true for me. I've read a lot of books, and I've always wanted to publish one myself. Now, I've finally done it.

I'd like to thank everyone who read this work, as well as the wonderful Nardack, who illustrated my characters in such a beautiful way.

Finally, I'd like to thank all those who were involved in getting the book published.

So, did you enjoy reading my little tale? This ending was a little different than the rest of the volumes', but the focus of these books will be to show Sirius's life and journeys around the world.

The next chapter will be all about Sirius traveling around this new world, doing everything he can for his students, and fighting his way past whatever hurdles may lie ahead.

Until next time!

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